

BANDWAGON

The Journal of the Circus Historical Society

NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 1997

**A Merry Christmas
and Happy New Year**

Arthur R. Hopper
General Agent and Traffic Manager

**RINGLING BROS
AND
BARNUM & BAILEY
CIRCUS**

THE GREATEST SHOW ON EARTH

Bandwagon

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THIS MONTH'S COVER

The Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus used this Christmas card in 1945.

A calendar's was under the monkey lithograph. An animal is pictured next to each month. Courtesy of Feld Entertainment, Inc.

ELECTION RESULTS

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Certified as an accurate vote count on December 15, 1997 by Karen F. Severson, Election Commissioner.

1998 CHS CONVENTION

The 1998 Circus Historical Society convention will be held in Atlanta, Georgia March 8 to 10.

The Big Apple Circus will be the feature of the annual meeting. Paul Binder will be the banquet speaker.

Registration and hotel information is listed on the insert in this issue.

NEW MEMBERS

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CIRCUS YEAR IN REVIEW

The 1997 Circus Year in Review will appear in the March-April 1998 *Bandwagon*.

Readers are asked to contribute photos, newspaper reports, advertising and other information to Fred D. Pfening III, 1075 West Fifth Avenue, Columbus, Ohio 43212. All material will be returned if requested.

CORRECTION

Several alert readers noted that the photo on the September-October *Bandwagon* cover was of the 1978 Ringling-Barnum Blue unit, rather than the Red as stated in the caption. Bill Woodcock sent the following information on the elephant herd on what was affectionately called the "Black and Blue Unit." It included twenty-two bulls, twenty Asians of which five were males, and two Africans, one of which was a male. Three of the Asian males are today involved in breeding programs; two, Vance and Charlie, at the Ringling-Barnum facility in Polk City, Florida, and the third, Hugo, at the Portland Zoo. The elephant department personnel included, in addition to Woodcock, Ben Williams, Chico Williams, Gary Jacobson, Ted Svertesky, Bill Bouthellier, Tom Haffner, Dan Pyle, Louie Del Moral, Sean Quinn, Wayne Pilz, Bobby Cline, Enoch Smith, Sammy Had-dock, Steve Tynel, and Capt. Harry Freed. Many of them went on to bigger and better things in the elephant world.



GREETINGS AND BEST WISHES FOR THE

Holidays
AND THE
New Year.

TOMMY - STRUPPI - NELLIE

JAMES MELVILLE And His Family

1837-1892

By Mark St. Leon and John Daniel Draper

"Interestingly, a recent history of the circus in Australia (1983) makes no mention of [James] Melville, the greatest rider in the history of that country." Thus wrote American circus historian Stuart Thayer in his *Annals of the American Circus* Volume III. The "recent history" to which Thayer referred was my 1983 book *Spangles & Sawdust: The Circus in Australia*. It is true that I failed to mention the rider James Melville. If only on the strength of his subsequent American reputation, Melville certainly deserved to be mentioned. But was Melville the greatest rider in the history of Australia as Thayer asserts? It is a moot point, since Australian circus produced many great riders in its heyday not the least of whom was the redoubtable May Wirth (See *Bandwagon*, May-June 1990).

In any case, Thayer's assertion intrigued me sufficiently to reconsider Melville's place in Australia's early circus history. When I heard that Dan Draper had already prepared a file on Melville's American career, a jointly authored article seemed a good idea.

Before going further, permit me to point out that Australia, "that country" to which Thayer referred, was not a country when the name of James Melville began to appear on Sydney circus bills early in the 1850s. It was still a collection of British colonies governed from London, most of them founded as inauspicious repositories for British convicts in the aftermath of the American Revolution. When the young James Melville commenced his apprenticeship as a circus equestrian, the great island continent was hardly settled or developed by the British beyond the major coastal centers of population and a few interior settlements. Mark St. Leon

Foundations of the Australian Circus

Modern circus is older than modern Australia. Astley began to give exhibitions of riding at Ha'penny

Hatch in the spring of 1768. Two years later in 1770 Captain James Cook RN charted the hitherto uncharted east coast of Australia. But another 18 years were to elapse before the first British settlement was established at Sydney, a little to the north of Cook's historic landing place of Botany Bay. By that time, Britain had lost its 13 American colonies—a major place of exile for convicts—and another place was required to relieve the pressure on Britain's over-crowded prisons.

James Melville
while with W. C.
Coup in 1879.
Pfening Archives.

In London on the evening of Saturday, May 12, 1787, a light opera called *Botany Bay*, written in honor of the new penal settlement, gave its closing performance at Royal Circus. The following morning a fleet of 11 convict transports and storeships quietly weighed anchor in Portsmouth Harbour and sailed for the real Botany Bay. Eight months later, the fleet reached its destination and the British occupation of the ancient continent and the displacement of its Aboriginal inhabitants commenced in earnest. Like Rome, modern Australian civilization was not built in a day.

Of all the features of British culture to be transplanted onto Australian soil, it would take almost 60 years before the first successful circus was opened. This was the Royal Circus of a horse trainer, publican and raconteur, Robert Avis Radford. It was erected and opened late in 1847 in Launceston (population 7,500) on the northern coast of Tasmania, the island south of the Australian mainland. The colonial riders, circus, racetrack or otherwise,

were gathering a reputation for themselves. Word was reaching England of the "fine feats of colonial boys in horsemanship" and even English circus riders decided to chance their luck in the new land down under.

Malcom's

Royal Australian Circus

In October 1850, nearly three years after the opening of Radford's Royal Circus in Tasmania, the first successful circus was inaugurated in Australia's oldest and largest city, Sydney, New South Wales. Under the auspices of a publican named John Malcom, the performers John Jones and Edward La Rosiere opened the Royal Australian Equestrian Circus. The circus was located in a building adjoining the rear of Malcom's Adelphi Hotel in York Street. When disagreement erupted between Jones and La Rosiere after only a few weeks, Malcom assumed personal control of the enterprise.

The York Street premises were thereafter known as Malcom's Royal Australian Circus, or similar names, until its conversion into a theatre in 1856.

A prosperous, busy seaport with a population of some 50,000 people, it is a matter of speculation why it took so long for circus to be properly introduced in NSW compared to its younger and smaller sister colony of Tasmania. The answer is unclear but probably lies in the inconsistent attitudes between the colonial administrations on the subject of public entertainment in what were essentially still British penal colonies.

At one time or another, the finest riders in Australia passed through Malcom's circus, some of them graduates of leading English equestrian companies such as Ducrow, Batty and Cooke. They included Madame Rosina, "pupil of Ducro's [sic] and late leading actress at Astley's Amphitheatre,"¹ probably the "Miss Rosina" noted by Arthur Saxon in his biography of Andrew Ducrow; her husband, Henry Burton, a former ringmaster of Cooke's Royal Circus; James Ashton, "the renowned British horseman," who had served his



equestrian apprenticeship in the circuses of Bell and Batty; and John Jones, who had performed at Astley's as a dancer in 1841 and tumbled in London "gaslight" shows but had served his equestrian apprenticeship in Tasmania with Robert Avis Radford, a horseman of no mean order. Some of these artists would continue to make their mark in Australian circus for many years to come.

Young James Melville

Probably to redress the colonial shortage of professional circus equestrians, Malcom offered apprenticeships in circus riding to youths and young girls. One of his graduates was an outstanding Scottish-born youth who made his debut at the Royal Australian Circus in January 1852.² At first, the 14 year old rider was billed as "Mr. Munro" but was soon billed under the *nom d'arena* of "Master Melville." In time, he would be known simply as James Melville.

James Melville was born apparently on October 15, 1837 as James Munroe (or Munro) in Inverness, Scotland, and accompanied his parents to Australia while only 18 months of age.³ James did not come from a family of circus people. His grandfather, father and uncles were "boat men" by profession. In Sydney, the Munro family achieved some degree of affluence. It was later recalled that in 1876 the family lived near the exclusive suburb of Neutral Bay on Sydney's North Shore. In that year also, a brother of James was elected a North Sydney municipal alderman.⁴ The young James first exposure was therefore to boating rather than equestrianism. On Sydney's harbor, at the age of 16, he won a two-and-a-half mile race in a shell boat. James also acted as coxswain for the crew of a larger boat, providing some indication of his small physique.

Witnessing the performances of the first circus equestrians in Sydney during 1850, James' interest in circus riding was aroused. Probably during 1851, at the comparatively late age of about 14 years, James entered the employment of John Malcom as one of a number of apprentice circus riders. Malcom's own ability as an equestrian is not documented but he was not known to appear in the ring of his circus in any capacity. It could be safely assumed therefore that his role was an entrepreneurial one only and the

GRAND JUVENILE NIGHT!!

GREAT TREAT!

MR. MALCOM begs respectfully to intimate to the ladies and gentry of Sydney, that at the request of several influential families, he is induced to give a Grand Juvenile

EQUESTRIAN ENTERTAINMENT,

THIS EVENING, January 22,

when he trusts the performances selected for the occasion may give satisfaction to those who may honour him with their presence.

N.B. On this occasion, doors to be opened at seven o'clock; performances to commence at a quarter past, and to conclude early.

The evening's entertainments will commence with an act of Horsemanship, by Master Melville, as the Pearl of Australia. Clown to the Arena, Mr. Williams.

After which, Mr. Clark will go through his Ariel Evolutions on the Corde Roide.

To be succeeded by Master Griffiths in a daring act of Equestrianism, as The Little Highlander.

The Monarch Horseman, Signor Cardona, will then appear in an intrepid act of Equestrianism, as Malabar, (throwing oranges) the Devil on two Sticks, and carrying Master Griffiths in several Positions.

The renowned British Horseman, Mr. Ashton, will then make his entree in the arena, in a daring barebacked Act of Horsemanship.

This advertisement for Malcom's Royal Australian Circus appeared in the *Sydney Morning Herald* on January 22, 1852. It mentions "Master Melville." Author's collection.

equestrian work in his circus, including the training of his apprentices, was left to others.

We are fortunate in having James Melville's own account of his early days as a young equestrian apprentice at Malcom's circus in an interview with the *New York Times* in February 1881: "My father knowing what a young daredevil I was and likely to have my own way, apprenticed me to learn to be a horse rider. Then I was in my glory, I tell you. There was no objection to apprenticing lads to be made riders in those days and the boys were better for it. It was hard work though. We had to help clean horses, bed them down, lead them around for exercise when they were not at work, and we had to go to school and know our lessons too. Then we were taught gymnastics and the first points of equestrianism, and the boy who tumbled the most times and got the most bloody noses, black eyes, sprains, twists was simply the one most laughed at for clumsiness. But there was no cruelty. . . . I served an apprenticeship of seven years and was never struck by a whip or a hand during all that time, but I loved the business I had determined to adopt,

and my teachers saw I only wanted encouragement and no punishment. I know that when I was practicing at the Sidney [sic] Amphitheatre under the old veteran Malcom, I would frequently arise at 4 o'clock and get out one of the horses that I used to use and have a few hours practice before the grooms were up. The old man would always find out though; the look of the horse would show it and then he would growl out, 'Oh yes, its all the work of that young devil Jim; if he don't stop I'll give him the soundest licking a boy ever had' but I never got it."⁵

Along with Malcom's other young equestrian apprentices, young James received guidance and encouragement from the array of equestrian talent that passed through the York Street amphitheatre. There were always the "house" riders, such as a Mr. Clark and a Mr. Williams but, during 1852, Malcom's audiences were also entertained by the most accomplished riders in the colonies, James Ashton, John Jones and Joachim Cardoza. Melville emulated their artistry, whether through observation or direct instruction. Ashton would later claim that Melville was his pupil, although there is little to suggest more than just a brief teacher-pupil relationship. There is, however, no truth apparent in Melville's assertion to a gullible American public that he was "the first bareback rider ever seen in Australia"⁶ as displays of bareback riding (without saddle, bridle and surcingle) had already been given in the colonies as early as 1848 at least.

The origins of the *nom d'arena* of "Melville" are unclear. The name does not appear in James' immediate family group, as far as I have been able to gather. It was of course by no means unique to Australian circus that a performer burdened by a prosaic surname would replace it with another more engaging for the bills, often duplicating the names of already famous performers in other lands. It may be worth noting that the epic novel *Moby Dick* was published in 1851 to much acclaim for its author, Herman Melville. Copies inevitably would have found their way to Australia especially as a thriving sea traffic had evolved with America's gold-stricken west coast. However, this explanation might be too simple, especially as there would have been a considerable lapse of time between when the book was

published in America and when it became generally available in the Australian colonies.

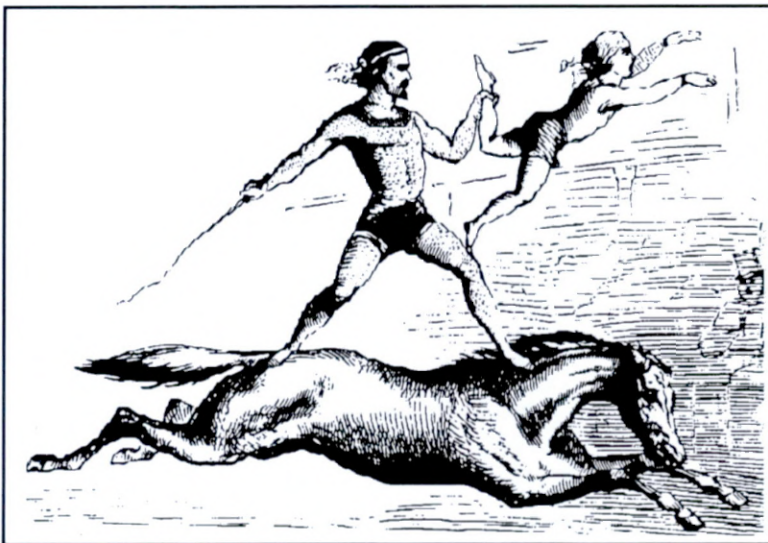
On the other hand, I have noted the appearance of a Thomas Melville, billed as "America's greatest equestrian" with the National Circus under the proprietorship of H. C. Lee & Co which opened in San Francisco on March 25, 1852. My theory is that Thomas Melville was a *nom d'arena* invented in the wake of the publishing success of *Moby Dick*. Newspapers from San Francisco that were landed in Sydney may have carried advertising for Lee & Co's National Circus featuring Thomas Melville. In turn, the name might have been seized upon by the young James Munro or, more to the point, his employer. Dan Draper has noted other performers active in American circus later in the century who employed the name of "Melville" perhaps in turn inspired by James, by then one of America's premier horsemen.

Malcom's was not a touring company. In any case, the paucity of inland settlement of the Australian colonies at this stage mitigated against the possibility of developing payable touring circuits. Located close to Sydney's center, Malcom's opened to the public three or four evenings each week. On occasion, Malcom did take his company on excursions outside of Sydney to make brief appearances at the Homebush races, the Botany Bay pleasure gardens or the outlying township of Parramatta. In this way, the young James Melville probably had his first taste of circus travel.

After a year away playing for the diggers of the first Australian gold rush, John Jones and his equestrian troupe returned the 120-odd miles to Sydney from the Bathurst goldfields in May 1852 to take up a four month long engagement at Malcom's Royal Australian Circus. It is arguable that from Jones, clearly the best all-round circus performer in Australia at that time, Melville found the genesis of his own riding style. Under his wing Jones took not only the young James Melville but also a young female rider, a Miss Howard. The trio presented "A Grand Scene

in the Circle" on Four Horses at Malcom's in June 1852. When Jones gave his benefit performance at Malcom's circus (by then known as Malcom's Royal Amphitheatre due to the addition of a stage to the arena) on Monday evening, August 2, 1852, other performers of the company filled out the evenings program. The versatile "Master" Melville himself appeared in a "comical scene on stilts" with another young apprentice, "Master" Thomas Bird; next as the "Australian Star Rider" in an act of bare backed riding; and finally in a plate spinning act.⁷

With most of Australia's circus talent drifting onto the goldfields of New South Wales and Victoria, the chances of promotion for the young equestrian apprentice were considerably improved. By 1854, James



The British horseman James Henry Ashton, one of Melville's mentors. From the June 2, 1855 *Illustrated Sydney News*. Author's collection.

had been appointed Malcom's "equestrian conductor" and was identified on the bills as "J. Melville Esq."⁸ Taking a wife seemed to be the next logical step for the precocious 19 year old.

Marriage

Although Melville missed the distinction of appearing in Australia's first circus, Radford's, he did the next best thing when he married a fellow equestrienne in Malcom's company, one of Radford's alumni. This was the girl variously billed as M'dlle Louise, Miss Howard or Maria Louise Fawcett (or Faucett) but whose real name was Elizabeth Louise Mills.⁹ It was as "Miss Howard," however, that the girl had

first appeared in Radford's circus in Tasmania in 1848, accompanied by her mother, the actress Mrs. Amy Howard.

As "the infant prodigy," Elizabeth Louise first appeared in Radford's Royal Amphitheatre in Launceston on the evening of December 26, 1848. Not only did little "Miss Howard" sing the song *I'm Ninety-Five* to excellent advantage, and surprise everyone by her dignified personification of old Granny, but she was applauded for her "courageous" style of riding, arguably the first display of female equestrianism seen in the colonies.¹⁰

Two years later, Elizabeth Louise made her first appearance in Malcom's Royal Australian Circus in Sydney as "Madam Louise" in a graceful act of horsemanship, "The Sylph of the Mountains." "The Sylph" and her other equestrian acts such as the "Tyrolese Shepherd" the "Swiss Milkmaid," and "The Aerial Messenger" were performed as duets with John Jones. In the equestrian ballet "Love Among the Roses," she was attended by other members of the company. She appeared on Jones' highly trained Arab mare in the piece "Venus: or the Goddess of Love" in which the fond Dove will appear as her constant attendant, fully pourtraying [sic] the purity of that ardent passion" and in a solo equestrian role as "The Flower Girl," Louisa Woolford's speciality in Astley's Amphitheatre in 1828.¹¹

An extravaganza or laughable afterpiece usually closed each evening's entertainment at the York Street circus but other non-circus items such as singing were also occasionally featured on the bill, in which "Miss Howard" used her ability as a capable songstress to advantage.

The stay of the mother and daughter at Malcom's was brief. A benefit for Mrs. and Miss Howard, for whom "untoward circumstances" had befallen since their arrival from Port Phillip, was announced for March 18, 1852 at a rival Sydney circus, the Royal Olympic, by then under the management of equestrian James Ashton. Elizabeth Louise appeared with Ashton in "The Sailor and His Bride," and on her own in the "Buy

[a] Broom Dance" and singing *I'm Ninety Five*. The "untoward circumstances" were not elaborated upon but the Howards' move to the rival circus suggests something of a disagreement with their previous employer, John Malcom. At any rate, Elizabeth Louise returned to Malcom's fold within a month. The "Misses Howard and Marie Louise Faucett" who appeared on Malcom's bills during April and May 1852 were, presumably, one and the same.

The marriage register of St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Sydney, records that James Munro (sic), bachelor, married Elizabeth Louise Mills, spinster, by special license at St. Andrews Presbyterian church, July 29, 1854. The marriage was witnessed by Alexander Munro (sic) and one T. A. Bonner.¹² The best things are always done in good time. On September 18, the *Sydney Morning Herald* announced the birth two days previously at Phillip Street, Sydney of "a son to the wife of J. Melville Munroe (sic), equestrian." This was their first son, Frank, who as also to make a name for himself in American circus annals. Within a few months, the Melvilles sailed from Sydney to take up a new engagement in Melbourne.

Astley's Amphitheatre (Melbourne)

A Melbourne builder, Thomas Mooney, constructed a wooden amphitheatre, the largest to be built in Australia and arguably Australia's first "white elephant." It was erected on the corner of Spring and Little Bourke Streets at a cost of some £40,000. The building was quadrangular in shape, 110 feet long by 80 feet wide and about 40 feet high. On the floor in the center of the building was a circle for equestrian entertainments, and in the northern end a stage for dramatic performances. It had a seating for 2,000 people. Named Astley's Amphitheatre after the London establishment, Mooney leased it to G. B. W. Lewis, an English gymnast who had served his apprenticeship at the London Astley's. Lewis dispatched his agent and manager, Henry Birch, to London to engage a company of performers for the new enterprise. Pending the arrival of the company from London, the amphitheatre opened on September



Astley's Amphitheatre in Melbourne some time before 1886. From Ross Thome, *Theatre Buildings in Australia to 1905*. Australian Architectural Research Foundation.

11, 1854 with a number of locally-engaged circus performers. These included the American clown Edward Yeamans and his Australian wife, Annie Griffiths; the clown and slack rope walker De Vere from California,¹³ the equestrians Cardoza, Master Francisco,¹⁴ John L. Smith and Mr. and Mrs. James Melville; Hore's Saxe-Horn band, and several others. These locally engaged performers made for a "powerful" company, even before the arrival of the performers from London.¹⁵

Henry Adams, Melville's professional partner-to-be, arrived in Australia in late 1854, as one of the company imported by G. B. W. Lewis. He was one of the two sons of the equestrian Henry Adams, said to have been "the only real rival Ducrow ever had," according to J. M. Turner's directory of British circus personnel, and probably the most outstanding disciple of Ducrow's new school of equitation. Henry and his brother Charles performed in the London Astley's as infant equestrians as early as 1831 and as late as 1841 according to Saxon.

In the Melbourne version of Astley's, Melville's *protean* act was "highly commendable" while Mrs. Melville represented an important addition to the equestrian strength of Lewis' company, previously described as "rather weak in ladies." Mrs. Melville was described as being of a "prepossessing appearance" and, the limitations of her colonial experience notwithstanding was "evidently well versed in the various points of [her] profession."¹⁶

The Melvilles appeared at the Melbourne Astley's for several weeks only. The evening's performance for December 1, 1854 was announced to

be their last and was given over as a benefit for James Melville. He promised the public equestrian performances for the evening "as have been rarely witnessed before" including his rendition of "Uncle Ben's First Visit to Astley's Amphitheatre." Mrs. Melville gave her own equestrian rendition of "The Heroine of the Corso."¹⁷

We then lose track of the Melvilles activities for several months. It seems not improbable that they drifted onto the Victorian goldfields north of Melbourne to join the rush that was by then well underway. Possibly they joined one of the circus companies playing on the diggings at that time, Jones', Noble's or Burton's.

Ashton's Royal Amphitheatre

We next encounter Mr. and Mrs. James Melville in Sydney in 1855.

James Ashton had returned to Sydney in May 1855 from the New England gold diggings and leased Malcom's York Street amphitheatre in which to present his own powerful little company. During the course of a five month long season, Ashton was joined by many of the artists who had passed through the ill-fated Astley's Amphitheatre in Melbourne. These included "the inimitable" Pablo Fanque on the tightrope and *corde elastique*; the clown Charles De Vere who was billed to "throw a flying somersault [sic] over 40 soldiers with their guns and bayonets fixed and firing at the time of his flight"; Harry Walker, "the prince of slack rope performers"; Edward Yeamans, "the celebrated American clown"; Henry Adams "the great trick rider and Shakespearian jester"; and the Melvilles who were "re-engaged" on July 23.

The *Illustrated Sydney News* of June 30, 1855 singled out the Melvilles' equestrian appearances for attention but, regrettably, reserved its vivid illustrations for the equestrian feats of others on the bill: "James Melville formerly a pupil of Mr. Ashton deserves high praise for his daring and fearless riding on a bareback steed; and the dancing and riding of Mrs Melville are very gracefully executed."

In the winter of 1855, a Wagga Wagga, NSW businessman, William Brown, formed a circus, aiming to capitalize on the thirst for entertain-

ment on the gold diggings. In early advertisements for his ostentatiously billed Royal Amphitheatre & Roman Coliseum, Brown trumpeted his engagement of "Mr James Melville, the Australian Star Rider, Rotorary [sic] Globe Performer . . . Classical Grouping Delineator and Equilibrist; and Mrs James Melville, the gem of Lady Equestriennes."¹⁸ There is, however, doubt as to whether Brown succeeded in enticing the Melvilles away from Ashton's Royal Amphitheatre in Sydney. If he did, the Melvilles did not remain for long for the couple soon reappeared at Ashton's.

Ashton's Sydney season proved to be not financially viable. Ashton's creditors mistakenly seized Melville's horses and wardrobe in lieu of Ashton's debts. Ashton departed Sydney for the provinces without offering the Melvilles any compensation. An anxious Melville placed an advertisement in the *Sydney Morning Herald* of November 28, 1855 to publicize his benefit performance necessary to "extricate himself from the difficulties he is in."

Adams' & Melville's Circus

Probably because Ashton could no longer afford to retain their services, several of Ashton's best performers decided to strike out on their own. Pablo Fanque set himself up with his New Royal Marquee--some 10,000 square feet of canvas--and he and his company of acrobats, globe, trapeze, stilt and other performing artists headed southwards from Sydney. James Melville and Henry Adams organized a company and shipped out of Sydney on December 11, 1855 by the 400 ton steamer *Boomerang* for Moreton Bay, better known today as Brisbane. The voyage of some 500 miles took four days.¹⁹ Their circus, one of the first to exhibit in Brisbane, was billed as the National Circus and Hippodrome. If Adams' and Melville's show did comprise a real "hippodrome," as was stated in the advertisements, this would constitute the first such exhibition in the Australian colonies. No earlier use of this term has been noted. Given the size of this little company, however, I am inclined to doubt that a "hippodrome" in the real sense of the term was presented. The circus opened a few days after its arrival on a vacant piece of ground opposite John Campbell's North Brisbane Hotel in Queen Street.²⁰ Campbell appears to have played the role of entrepreneur in promoting Adams'



James Melville, on right, with his family. Pfening Archives.

& Melville's circus to Brisbane audiences.

Brisbane's only newspaper, the *Moreton Bay Courier*, recorded: "The company of performers who arrived by the *Boomerang* are very far superior to anything of the kind before witnessed at Moreton Bay. At first there was some difficulty in selecting a site for the tent and the heavy rain of Tuesday night flooded the ring in the low position they had occupied; but the tent is now pitched in an excellent situation, on the high ground near the gaol. The performance of Mr. Melville, as an equestrian and in feats of posturing and strength with Master Hernandez, are admirable, and the graceful and easy attitudes of the boy, in the most constrained positions are equally remarkable. Mr. De Vere excels in leaping. His somersault over three horses, with two men and a boy on the top, elicited deserved applause, as did his slack rope exercises. Mr. Robinson's cannonball exercises and above all the feat of balancing Mr. De Vere on a pole some eighteen feet long, while the latter climbs to the top with the agility of a cat, and his extraordinary act of horsemanship in poisoning Mr. Melville in the air while riding and managing two horses gave great satisfaction. Mr. Adams is a very clever actor in broad burlesque. He makes a good clown and his 'Broadway fop' was extremely amusing. In the 'bustle' scene this gentleman might however sober down his exuberant notion a little. *Verb sat* (sic). Mrs. Melville is a graceful rider and danc-

er and her performance on Cachouca on Thursday deserved far better music than she had, one of the band being unfortunately maimed (sic) and absent. Altogether these performances are worthy of the fullest approbation and patronage and we strongly recommend a visit. Ladies will find nothing to offend, we feel assured; and as an enterprising townsman has now engaged the company, it is to be hoped that there will be crowded houses. Satisfaction is sure to follow. We have not space to enumerate the sagacious performances of the pony 'Billy.' They must be seen to be appreciated."²¹

Over the 1856 New Year, Adams and Melville re-located their little company to Ipswich, a township west of Brisbane, to take advantage of the holiday festivities there. Returning to Brisbane, the company re-opened on Monday January 14, again under the management of the "enterprising townsman" Mr. John Campbell. The performance was given under the patronage of the "Government Resident . . . together with most of the leading gentry and a large number of ladies." The following night the final performance was given and then, on Wednesday January 16, the little company shipped for Sydney by the *Boomerang*.

After their return to Sydney, the Melvilles and Adams were engaged by Malcom to appear once again at the Royal Amphitheatre in York Street. At a performance there in mid-February, the evening's entertainments commenced with the entrance of Melville as the *Air Diver of Seville*. Mrs. Melville appeared in "an entirely new act of equestrianism" as the *Fairy Sprite of the Golden Shower*. Adams and Melville performed a double act of horsemanship, *The Roman Gladiators*. But the Melvilles and Adams were only passing time at Malcom's while reorganizing their own circus.

Late the following month, March 1856, Adams and Melville opened their Royal Hippodrome and Circus to Sydney audiences. Their marquee was erected near Pammel's Mills in Glebe, an inner-western Sydney suburb. Prices were set at three shillings for boxes and two shillings for the pit, typical of colonial circus prices when not playing the goldfields. In a diplomatic appeal to both emergent Australian nationalism and British loyalties, the advertisements in the *Sydney Morning Herald* were signed off "Advance Australia! God Save the Queen!"²²

Australian Departure

The combination of Adams & Melville did not last long however. The heady days of the great Australian gold rush were ending. Public tastes were changing. The last of the permanent amphitheatres in the colonies closed their doors or were converted into legitimate theatres. The circus companies that remained were obliged to take advantage of the newly emerging inland population centers to develop their own touring routes. The Melvilles had other plans.

Later in 1856, the Melvilles and Adams departed Australia for Chile before moving on to California where they joined Frank "Pop" Whittaker, in Lee and Bennett's Circus. Staying one season in California, the Melvilles then travelled east to join the Joe Pentland Circus in the summer of 1857.²³

In 1858, Henry Adams returned to Australia as a member of J. A. Rowe's company. He became a circus proprietor of some note during the 1860s after which his name fades from colonial circus annals. James Melville subsequently enjoyed a career as one of the top equestrians in American circus. In the early 1860s, the Melvilles travelled the Midwest with their own circus company, Melville's Australian Circus.²⁴

Melville's Australian Career

We return then briefly to Thayer's assertion that James Melville was "the greatest rider" in the history of Australia. I feel that this would not only overstate Melville's place in Australian circus history but understate the continuing evolution in Australian circus equestrianism that was apparent at least until the 1920s.

An old Australian showman, Harry Lyons, recorded many accounts of Australian show business for the *Sydney Sportsman* in the early 1900s. Of the Scottish-born Melville, whom he erroneously described as being born in the colony of New South Wales, Lyons wrote "Jimmy . . . was the best *Australian* circus rider *of his day*."²⁵ We need not quibble over Melville's birthplace. Even if he was born in Scotland, he was substantially a colonial Australian by upbringing. On these grounds, Lyons' assertion is palatable. Although press accounts and circus billings suggest that the riding of James Ashton, John Jones and Robert Avis Radford attracted greater attention at the time, it must be conceded that these equestrian lu-

minaries, to a man, were English-born and bred. But does that still make Melville the greatest ri-

Herald used by the James Melville
Circus in 1864. Pfening Archives.

[illegible]

der in the history of Australia? I think not.

Melville himself said in 1881 that "no-one there [in Australia] has yet performed the feats that I did. That is where I gained the title of champion."²⁶ I have been unable to locate any Australian circus advertising for the relevant period (1852-56) where Melville is billed with the title of "champion," nor have I been able to ascertain whether any championship was held between Australian riders of this period. As for Melville's claim that "no-one there [in Australia] has yet performed the feats that I did" would have to be taken *cum grano salis*. For one thing, how would he have known what developments had taken place in Australian circus equestrianism since his departure in 1856, 25 years previously? If there was a consistently strong and continuously developing feature of Australian circus, it was its equestrian department.

As great as Melville was, I consider May Wirth was more deserving of the title of Australia's greatest rider.

The Melvilles Arrive in the USA

James Melville made his American debut on Lee & Bennett's Great North American Circus in 1857, about the age of twenty. At that time, with twenty five performers, this organization was the largest circus company travelling in California. As a principal rider, James Melville was the star performer on that show. In the following years he was to join the elite group of bareback riders that included Eaton Stone, Levi North and James Robinson. On Lee & Bennett his wife, Louise, presented a riding act and Master Melville was also there. The proprietor, Lee, was an old English performer and Bennett was a banker who financed the operation. Their equipment was excellent with wagons from Abbott Co. in New Hampshire and a bandwagon from Fielding Bros. in New York City. On the show there was the popular French clown, Rochette, for whom Frenchtown, California was named.²⁷

In September of that year the Melvilles joined Rowe's Pioneer Circus which, despite the illustrious example of the Melvilles, went broke and was forced to close. At that time James Hernandez was riding on the Rowe Show and a professional rivalry immediately developed between him and James Melville that resulted in a challenge for a riding

contest. Whether it ever took place is not recorded.²⁸

After only one season in California, the Melvilles travelled to the East later in 1857 to join the Joe Pentland Circus owned by John Sloat and James G. Shephard and they continued there in 1858. The rope performer, Richard Hemmings, was on the show. He and Louise Melville presented a double ascension as a free act. They would walk to the top of the tent simultaneously from opposite sides. Louise was also a most graceful and accomplished equestrienne.²⁹

Later that year the Melville family joined Nixon & Kemp's Circus. Continuing on this show into 1859 James was billed as the "Great Melville," the Australian horseman, by universal consent of the public, the "most astonishing rider that has ever lived." Mrs. Melville was heralded as a rider from the Melbourne Circus. James Melville was a part owner. In addition to the Melvilles, it featured W. W. Nichols, the famous "backward rider," who always did his bareback act facing the rear of the horse. Also rounding out the troupe were Dan Castello, Tom Linton, Frederick Rentz, Signor Bliss and Caroline Nixon. In the autumn of 1859 the Melvilles moved to Lafayette Nixon & Aymar's Circus (Aymar and Sherwood, proprietors), showing at the Chatham Amphitheatre in New York City.³⁰

After appearing on The Great Van Amburgh Show in 1860 at the old Bowery Theatre, the next year James was performer and equestrian director on Goodwin & Wilder's Circus before the family joined Antonio Bros.' Great World Circus & Gymnasium. In the tour through the Midwest, by the time that show had reached Chicago, the title had been expanded to Antonio Bros.' Great World Circus & James Melville's Australian Circus Combined. Melville appeared as the great Australian rider; and Louise, the brilliant equestrienne, was performing on the war horse "American Eagle." Melville's equestrian feats were performed entirely without saddle or bridle as he rode over four barred gates while carrying his son Frank on his head. He was showered with profound tributes of praise.³¹

The family, including Masters Sammy and Frank appearing with their parents, rode on Mabie Bros. Circus & Menagerie in 1862, again in the Midwest. At that time while riding horseback, James set some sort of a record as he turned Frank

[illegible]

James Melville was featured in 1869 with L. B. Lent's New York Circus. Pfening Archives.

on his feet for fifty eight somersaults.

That winter the four of them were with Ed & Jerry Mabie's Winter Garden Circus in Chicago. This show offered a very strong program which, in addition to James Melville, featured Den Stone, Dan Rice with his horse Excelsior, Stewart Craven with the elephants Romeo and Juliet, and Langeworthy's lions. Also on the program was Dan Castello with top clown billing over Dan Rice. He presented admirable single leaps and did an equestrian act.³²

For the next three years James Melville operated his own circus, sometimes in conjunction with another proprietor. In 1863 the title was the Great Union Triplicate Combination, Melville's Great Australian Circus, Henry Cook's Mammoth Troupe of Performing Dogs and Mon-

keys and R. Sands' Complete Circus
Co.³³

In 1864 the title was simply Melville's Australian Circus. In these years the members of the family appeared together in the performances. James Melville rode at the National Circus in Philadelphia in February of 1865. Dan Rice was also there. In December of 1865 we find the first mention of a trip to Havana, where James appeared as a bareback rider on Don Jose Chiarini's Circus. For the 1865 season the show was titled *Mabie & Melville's Australian Circus*, sometimes called *Mabie & Melville Boat Show*.³⁴

Going to Cuba again in early 1866 with sons Sam, Frank and George, who appeared in a posturing act, the family apparently did not enjoy the engagement for James broke the contract and returned early to the United States. He then took his family to join George Bailey & Co.'s Menagerie & Circus.³⁵

By this time, the eldest son Frank, at the age of twelve, was becoming a recognized rider in his own right. On October 13, 1866 at Norfolk, Connecticut he was presented with a gold medal by members of the G. F. Bailey Circus Co. in admiration of his unceasing perseverance in his profession.³⁶ The medal, elegant in design, bore the following inscription: "Presented by the members of the G. F. Bailey's Circus Company to Frank Melville Aged 12 Years for accomplishing 16 back Somersaults on Horseback."

On the reverse side was the image of a running horse with a boy in the act of throwing a back somersault. The presentation was made by the ringmaster, Mr. Ellingham on behalf of Frank's fellow performers.

After 1866 Sam Melville was apparently no longer with the family act. In 1869, his name appeared as a performer with the Stickney Great Empire City Circus and more specifically in newspaper ads as a clown for the Adam Forepaugh Circus in 1871 and 1873. The last mention of his name was as a survivor at the time of his father's death in 1892.³⁷

In the fall of 1866 James Melville transferred to Lent's New York Circus. The next year he again joined G. F. Bailey & Co. where his collection of family equestrian acts was entitled "Melville's Great Australian Circus." At that time large scale newspaper advertising was beginning to be used by circuses as it was by railroads and manufacturers of farm machinery. Frank Melville was now receiving individual billing

in these ads.³⁸

In 1867 George Melville was doing a youthful clowning act on G. F. Bailey & Co. This is interesting because two decades later he became a featured clown and tumbler on Barnum & London. He pursued this role after a serious fall when riding as a bareback and bounding jockey rider in the early 1880's.³⁹

Yankee Robinson engaged James Melville for his Great Consolidated Shows for the 1868 season. James, the "Champion equestrian of the age," rode with the baby rider, Alexander Melville. Master Alexander was considered the most handsome child in the business. The great clown Charley Parker served as ringmaster. Mrs. Melville also rode on this show. This was the last year to which a reference was found concerning Mrs. Melville's riding.⁴⁰

John A. Dingess, the renowned advance agent, later reported that James L. Hutchinson, the future partner of Barnum and Bailey's, carried young Alexander Melville on his shoulders among the audience selling photographs of the child star with the Yankee Robinson Circus. They were dispensed for twenty five cents each and Hutchinson, for his share, received ten percent of the proceeds.

For the next three seasons, 1869 to 1871, these artists performed with L. B. Lent's New York Circus. It was about this time, according to Dingess, that Charles W. Fish, "whose egotistical propensity was at all times predominant," challenged James Melville to a bareback trial of skill for one thousand dollars a side. Quoting Dingess, "Mr. Melville's reply was that he considered Fish beneath his rank in the profession, but offered to match his son, Frank, then fifteen years of age, against him for the amount specified, when egotism, like a cascade fell to its lowest depths."

In 1869 James Melville, Mlle Caroline Rolland and Robert Stickney were listed as the three most celebrated bareback riders in the world. That year, the Great Melville, with his infant son, Alexander, rode a thrilling bareback steeple chase act. On September 25th during Lent's New York Circus date at Hudson City, an eighteen carat half dollar size gold medal was presented to Master Alexander, the infant

GRAND GALA DAY AT WARREN, WEDNESDAY, MAY 29TH. JOHN H. MURRAY'S GRAND CIRCUS.



Mr. Murray takes pleasure in announcing the return of his MAGNIFICENT CIRCUS to the United States, after a prosperous tour of the entire West Indies, and last from Havana, Cuba, being everywhere greeted with ever-flowing audiences who universally pronounce his Grand Circus the

best that ever Visited their Country.

Leading and only Purely
LEGITIMATE

EQUESTRIAN ESTABLISHMENT

in America. The only circus that performs all its stunts! The cherished institution of the people for the Amusement of the Young.

MR. MURRAY takes pleasure in announcing a partial list of his Artists for the Season, and also stating that his present Company is far superior to any heretofore under his management.

MISS LIZZIE MARCELLAS,

The Beautiful, Unapproachable and Thoroughly Schooled Equestrienne.

JAMES MELVILLE,

The Great Australian Bare-Back Rider

SENORITA MILLIE TOURNOUR

Equestrienne and Queen of the Air.

WOODA COOK,

Beyond dispute the Champion Somersault

Rider of the World.

LITTLE ALEXANDER, the Wonder of

the age, in his exciting hurdle act on two

diminutive ponies.

PROFESSOR STOWES wonderful Troop of

Educated Dogs.

WM. ODELL, the Great American Bare Back

Trick and Somersault Rider.



Melville was the featured male rider in this 1878 John Murray Circus newspaper ad. Pfening Archives.

equestrian, in appreciation of his infinite skill and daring. On the reverse was the image of two horses on which Master Melville stood. Again quoting Dingess, "Alexander Melville was quite a prodigy in the act of riding two ponies and was a most graceful and extraordinary child." During the 1870 season he was characterized as "Master Alexander, the beautiful baby hurdle rider."

Frank Melville was now individually featured in advance newspaper publicity as a graceful somersault rider. George Melville was merely listed as Master George.⁴¹

There was champion riding in 1871 involving the Melvilles and Robert Stickney. James Melville accepted James Robinson's challenge for a carrying act. Nothing came of it. Then Melville challenged all equestrians and especially Robert Stickney for a one thousand dollar champion riding contest. Late in September the champion match between Stickney and Melville was indefinitely postponed because of the conflicting engagements of both. Of course all of this flaunting of skills created great publicity for their particular talents and abilities.⁴²

At that time there was no question that James Melville was a rider of

surpassing wonder with admirable physical development. His performance personified the fable of the centaur. As Dingess wrote, "And what nobler and more thrilling spectacle could have been presented than this magnificent fellow standing upon the back of his flying courser, hardly touching his reeking hide, like Mercury, the winged messenger of the gods, dispatched on a matter of life and death to a doomed world." The Melville family, that is James and some of his sons, continued to perform together on various shows until the mid-1870's. These circuses were: P. T. Barnum (1872-1874), G. F. Bailey & Co.'s Circus (including Signor Sebastian's Italian Circus) (1873-1874), Melville, McGinley & Cooke Centennial Circus (1875) and Howes Great London (1876). James did principal riding and also appeared with his sons, Alexander and Frank.⁴³

Frank celebrated his twenty first birthday on September 16, 1875 on Melville, Maginley & Cooke's Circus. On that occasion he was presented with a handsome gold locket. He was then riding a graceful bareback act and was throwing backward somersaults on his running steed.

At the same time his father James, rode a bareback horse and, unaided, carried his youngest son upon his head. This presentation was all part of the patriotic piece, "Putnam, the Iron Son of '76."

In 1874 James Melville rode opposite James Cooke on P. T. Barnum and two years later he was a fellow performer with Mlle Dockrill and her famous four horse act and with R. H. Dockrill with his trained horse "Ellington."⁴⁴

No mention of Alexander was found for anytime after 1876, even at the time of his father's death. That year was also the last Frank appeared on the same show with his father.

In 1878 James Melville rode a bareback act on John H. Murray's Circus and was also treasurer of the Equestrian Benevolent Association. When this organization became defunct that year, it was his duty to distribute the remaining funds among all the members then in good standing.⁴⁵

For part of the 1879 season James performed on P. T. Barnum as a rider. Melville was on the W. C. Coup

Shows for the last part of the 1879 season as well as for 1880 and 1881. With that circus he served as equestrian director as well as performer in a number of interesting and thrilling presentations. He directed the leaping horse Nettle in seven foot hurdles over six other horses.

For the 1879 season Coup featured a broncho horse troupe. At that time equine liberty acts were becoming popular although they were not always known by that term. In this instance ten horses first appeared in single file and went through a military drill consisting of forming ranks, platoon and company fronts and columns while constantly moving, wheeling and keeping aligned. James Melville, the trainer, would drop a handkerchief near the horse at the end of the line. That horse would pick it up and pass it on to the next, each doing the same until it reached the last horse in the line. This horse delivered it to Melville as he kicked up its heels to show how smart he thought he was. To end the turn, the horse, Bravo, then went down the line as he pushed each horse with his nose. As each horse was in turn nudged, it wheeled and left the ring. Bravo was the last to leave.⁴⁶

In 1880 Melville's Australian Circus artists were headed by James, whose reputation by then was established as a leading bareback equestrian. He was a thrilling hippodrome rider and presented grand trotting and carrying acts. Also on the show that year were Katie Stokes in daring principal riding, Emma Stokes in manege riding and William O'Dell in pirouettes and somersault specialties.

In 1881 James Melville's son George was a bounding jockey rider and a hippodrome rider on the Coup Show. This was their last appearance together.

For the 1882 season James joined the Barnum & London Shows as an equestrian, ringmaster and starter for the hippodrome races and in 1884 he served as an equestrian on the Adam Forepaugh Circus as well as co-equestrian director with Samuel Watson.⁴⁷

James Melville's last recorded professional appearance was on the Melville-Hamilton Circus Co. in 1892. He died at his home at 207 W. 34th Street in New York City on November 17th of that year, age 55. His survivors were his wife and five children including three sons, Samuel, Frank and George. His funeral

took place two days later with the Rev. Jess R. Kerr of the Fourth Presbyterian Church officiating.⁴⁸

Melville's work had always been considered the perfection of equestrian skills and his horses were as beautiful and intelligent as any that ever graced a circus ring.

James Melville Aftermath

Mrs. James Melville spent the last years of her life in England. We know this because she was photographed at the age of 86 when the stars of the Olympia Circus entertained members of the Variety Artists' Home at Twickenham on January 15, 1923. Described as "an old actress and famous equestrienne," she was photographed in the presence of Madame Schreiber and her horse.⁴⁹

Frank Melville

Frank Melville (1854-1908) was less than three years old when he arrived in America with his parents. From about the age of eight through twenty two he appeared regularly with his father.

By 1877 he was fast becoming a most finished artist and an incomparable horseman. He was to attain an eminence in his profession which was seldom reached. That year he joined Howes' Great London Shows, Dockrill's Arenic Aggregation & Sanger's English Menagerie where he did a somersault bareback act clowning by Johnny Paterson, and a

Melville was featured in this 1880 W. C. Coup newspaper ad. Pfening Archives.

COUP CAPTURES CHICAGO.

IMMEDIATE SUCCESS OF

THE W. C. COUP

New United Shows!

LAKE FRONT—THIS WEEK ONLY.

First appearance this season of

MISS KATIE STOKES,
The Premiere Equestrienne.

MR. JAMES MELVILLE,
The Famous Bareback Equestrian.

ROYAL JAPANESE TROUPE,
THE GREAT INDIAN SHOW,

A COMPLETE MUSEUM, MENAGERIE, AND CIRCUS
OF SUPER-EMINENT MERIT.

Two performances daily. Doors open at 1 and
7 o'clock; commence one hour later.

ADMISSION:

Adults..... 50 cents
Children..... 25 cents
Reserved seats..... 25 cents extra

There will be a procession on the West Side at 9 a.m.
sharp this morning.
Ladies and children, to avoid the rush, should go in
the afternoon.

Tickets on sale at the Palmer House.
PROCESSION THIS MORNING, ON NORTH SIDE,
leaving lot at 9 o'clock.

jockey act clowning by Charles McCarthy.

The following year Frank was a principal equestrian on the Adam Forepaugh Circus. Appearing on that same circus was a young lady of sixteen, Louise Boshell (1862-1934), who performed on the high wire and on the slack wire. One of her presentations was called the telegraphic wire act. She had joined the show on May 8th. On August 3rd she and Frank were married at Ishpening, Michigan.⁵⁰

Appearing on the Great London Show in 1879 Louise Boshell Melville was the best known wire walker of the period.⁵¹ As a slack wire artist she juggled regularly while swinging back and forth in great arcs. In spite of her demonstrated skill, on June 4th, while mounting the tight wire, her ladder slipped as she had one foot on it and the other on the wire. She was pitched head first to the ground and had to be helped from the arena in a stunned condition. The next day, however, she was back at work.

Whether or not Louise had previous equestrian experience, that year⁵² she was also listed as a rider, appearing alongside the bareback rider Addie Austin.

Frank Melville was one of a trio of bareback riders on the Great London Show that included William Dutton and the great hurdle rider Don Geronimo Bell. He also shared honors with Dutton as a trick rider. Nat Austin was the equestrian director.

Although advertised as the undisputed champion rider, very early in the 1879 season at Philadelphia, Frank had an unfortunate accident during his bareback routine. He was thrown from his mount as a child ran toward his horse brandishing a hat. The horse fell on Melville and crushed him badly. He was carried from the ring unconscious. It was a serious injury, but he eventually recovered and returned to his riding later in the season.

During that season Frank Melville was described variously as daring and impetuous but he never appeared to better advantage. As the circus headed toward Texas in October, he left and joined the W. C. Coup Shows where he continued his principal riding.⁵³

In 1880 the Melvilles returned to the Great London Shows. Frank rode his familiar principal act and Louise was featured on her own as a horsewoman, undoubtedly specializing in manege riding. She also worked on the high wire. During part of this

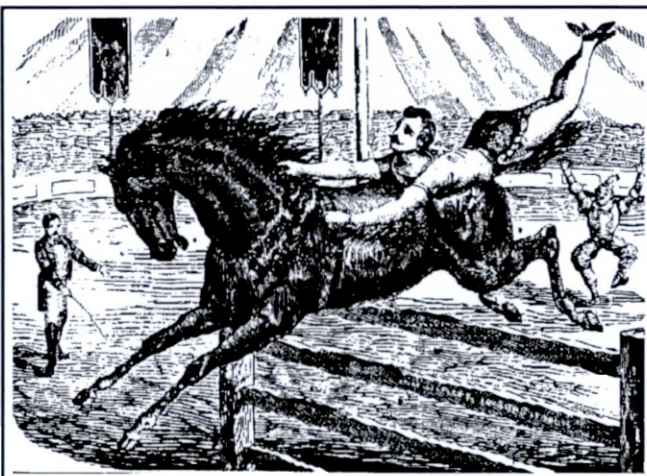
season Frank was involved with Robert Stickney and John W. Hamilton in running the Imperial Parisian Circus.⁵⁴

Frank and Louise Melville joined the Barnum & London Shows for the 1881 season. Highly acclaimed as the "unchallenged champion bareback rider of the world," Frank first appeared on a horse that was so sedate that it had the gait of a rocking horse in simulating a canter, when not going faster than a walk. He then concluded his marvelously graceful and skillful principal riding by introducing his beautiful Arabian mare, Bonnie Bessie, and by performing his celebrated and difficult trotting act. Riccardo Bell, the German dialect clown, made himself heard during the clown stops where he would extract a tear from the most stoic. Later in the program in ring three Frank Melville simultaneously rode and drove six flying horses as a Roman gladiator and courier. Opposite him in ring one was Madame Dockrill, also riding and driving six horses. On the same program Louise showed her dainty skillfulness on the slack wire and also appeared as "Queen of the Lofty Wire."⁵⁵

After an absence of two years from the W. C. Coup Shows, Frank Melville returned in 1882. His father had been equestrian director there in 1881 and now his illustrious son was back to perform as a principal equestrian. He and William Ducrow rode opposite each other as the champion riders of the world.⁵⁶

The complete title of the show that year was W. C. Coup's United Monster Shows Combined with Fryer's Great Parisian Hippodrome. It opened the season in Augusta, Georgia and covered a lengthy route in continuously bad weather.

On August 19th, after exhibiting at Cairo, Illinois, Coup experienced a disastrous train wreck just north of that city. The show reached Detroit on the 23rd for a two day stand in a very bad condition. Before Coup could get his affairs straightened out, Frank Melville along with equestrian director William Ducrow and performer George Loyal⁵⁷ caused a writ of attachment to be executed for five thousand dollars for back salaries due. This action tied up the show.



James Melville as pictured in an 1880 W. C. Coup courier. Pfening Archives.

Coup had been offered financial aid and it was generally believed that he could have easily extricated himself from his difficulty, but his temperament came to the fore and he was helpless. He appeared to have more concern for getting even with Melville and the others than for anything else. As the attachment rolled over his circus, the entire outfit was sold at a sheriff's sale on September 16th. There was a general dispersal of the valuable equipment to a number of proprietors in attendance. Impulsiveness was Coup's great weakness. His organizational skill, force of character, personal magnetism, appearance and intelligence were superb. However, a crisis such as this caused him to panic, to throw good judgement to the winds and to swap success for failure. Later, he did make a come-back of sorts, with several smaller establishments--a dog and pony show, a museum, etc.--but he would never again own a full fledged circus.

For Frank Melville and Louise 1883 began on the Barnum & London Circus and ended in the fall with a professional trip to Europe that was to take six seasons. Riding on the Barnum show that year, Frank used a beautiful gray horse, wore pink silk tights and carried a riding whip with which he would switch sawdust on the ground as he was being interviewed. On the back of his noble steed he turned several back somersaults and pirouettes in mid air and leaped from the ground to the galloping horse's back in a fifteen minute performance twice a day. Louise again appeared on both the slack wire and the high floating wire.⁵⁸

Frank's brother George was also on the show. He had once been a successful rider, but as an equestrian performer he never had Frank's build or presence. As the result of a fall, he had essentially wound up his career as a bareback rider the previous year with W. O. Dale Stevens' Great Australian Circus. This show had been organized by the American foot juggler W. O. Dale Stevens, whose wife Linda Jeal was the great pioneer equestrienne from California. Now in 1883 on the Barnum & London Shows, George Melville was mainly clowning as well as demonstrating his considerable skills in tumbling, leaping and juggling. In juggling his trade mark was the "kitchen" act in which he utilized cooking utensils.⁵⁹

Leaving for Europe at the end of October 1883, the Melvilles' tour took them to England, then to Paris in April and finally to Berlin in November. In England they had engagements with Hengler's Circus and with Garcia's Circus and at the Royal Aquarium in London before going to the Paris Hippodrome and then to the Rentz Circus in Berlin. Frank did his customary principal and jockey riding and Louise did her specialties on both the slack and the tight wires.⁶⁰

All of 1885 was spent in Russia, mostly in Moscow and then in St. Petersburg. The March engagement with the Salamonsky Circus in Moscow was extended for three months. After his first performance there, Frank was recalled ten times to receive the hearty applause of the delighted audience. In June Theodore C. B. Melville, the infant son of Frank and Louise, was baptized in Moscow and members of the Russian nobility gave the little one valuable presents.⁶¹

The following year, they continued in St. Petersburg for the first six months. Frank rode on Cirque Ciniselli. He was presented with a substantial medal which was richly carved. For the second half of the year he did riding acts in Warsaw, Poland.

The year 1887 found the Melvilles at Stuttgart, Germany with Circus Corty-Althoff and for the summer he was under engagement with Hagenbeck's Circus.

By February of 1888 the Melvilles had journeyed to Amsterdam to ap-

pear on Circus Carre and in June they were at Dusseldorf, Germany. Most of the following year was spent first in Paris and then again in Germany. In March of 1890, the Melvilles returned home from London, ending their grand triumphal tour of Europe.⁶²

During five of the next fifteen seasons, the Melvilles were on Barnum & Bailey, 1890, 1891, 1894, 1903 and 1904. In the first three Frank and Louise performed their specialties--bareback, jockey riding, and wire, respectively. In the fall of 1890 Frank with his wife and son went to Orrin Bros. in Mexico. In January of 1894 Frank was working with the rider Harry Amphlett at the Bridgeport quarters. Also, in that year Collin Melville, presumably the son who who had been baptized in Moscow, was riding in a pole race against a horse. No mention of him was found at any later time and Frank Melville's obituary, eighteen years later, specifically stated that there were no children. What happened to Collin is an unanswered question.⁶³

An interesting account survives of how life went on in the dressing room under Barnum's big tents in those years. Frank Melville, whose grace and skill made him a star performer, prepared for his appearance with deliberation. He placed his tights, towels, grease paints and his mirror on his trunk with close economy of room. He rigged up his mirror, which was about six inches long and four inches wide, upon a stand not unlike a musician's rack. He carefully examined his tights to make sure that they were not likely to give way during the performance. Having satisfied himself, he removed his clothing and very carefully drew on his tights. Not a spangle would he allow to be awry. Having arranged his costume, he put on his coat, thrust his feet into the wooden clogs and made up his face as an actor would. "I've got twenty pairs of tights to start with," Melville observed to Ignacio Jones, a trapeze performer, who sat on the trunk next to him. "They will last me about ten weeks and there one hundred fifty dollars are gone. I get harder on tights every year or else they don't make them as good as they used to do."

Then Mr. Melville relapsed into gloomy silence.

In 1903 and 1904, his last two seasons on Barnum & Bailey, Frank was first the assistant to equestrian director William Ducrow and then equestrian director himself. He also presented the phenomenal seventy pony act. With Melville standing at an elevated position in the center, this panorama featured equines running in concentric circles about him, the animals in each circle alternately proceeding in an opposite direction from those in another.⁶⁴

Then followed the hippodrome races and two high jumping horses with a record of over seven feet. As the audience watched these displays it could appreciate why Frank Melville had inherited from his famous father the title of "King of Equestrians." Paraphrasing a statement in the Barnum & Bailey courier for 1904, his vast experience as a principal rider and his unabatable energy and swift action coupled with good taste brought together in him all the elements necessary to conduct with rapidity and smoothness a performance so vast and varied. He was truly a master mind in a master's place.

In 1903 Louise Melville was presenting posing horses with the eminent horseman Hugo Herzog.

Early in 1893 Frank Melville had tried his hand at managing a riding school at Louisville, Kentucky. Then, the Melvilles went to Sells Bros. Circus for the 1893 and 1895 seasons. A lithograph from 1895 featured the principal riding acts of Effie Dutton and Frank Melville.⁶⁵

The Melvilles continued from 1896

Sells Bros. lithograph featuring Frank Melville and Effie Dutton. Circus World Museum collection.

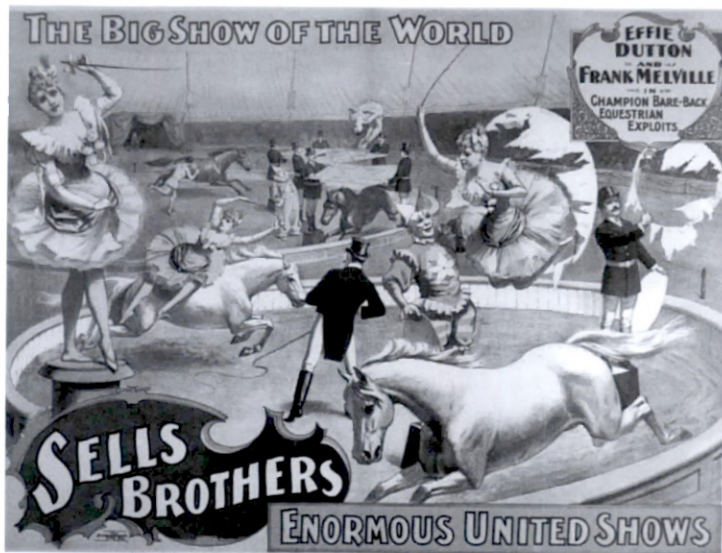
through 1902 on the Adam Forepaugh & Sells Bros. Circus.⁶⁶ By this time Frank was extending his duties and presentations from his standard bareback and bounding jockey acts. As early as 1896 he took the responsibilities of equestrian director on Forepaugh-Sells. In addition he introduced a novel, amusing and entrancing performance by ten Lilliputian equines, a truly equine kindergarten. In another display was a beautiful and sagacious troupe of nine ponies including the champion high jumper Nettle. There were midget mammoths, ponies and dogs in a surprising series of evolutions and tableaux, showing the result of kind and patient training. At another time a combination of an elephant, ponies and sacred Burmese cattle initiated a unique and cute collection of original tricks. Mr. Melville's animal conglomeration of the baby elephant Cuba, two beautiful Hungarian ponies and a dwarf zebu never failed to please the crowds. From the group of cake walking horses, Sultan and Lordly were ridden at different times by Frank.

The Adam Forepaugh & Sells Bros. Circus was a large show in its initial year, 1896. Travelling in three sections on 50 sixty foot railroad cars, it had 15,000 seats under a 178 by 388 foot big top. The advance advertising recognized ten champion equestrians in "principal, double, carrying, jockey, juggling and hurdle bareback riding" acts. In addition to Frank these artists included the English bounding jockey William Wallet, the Orfords, and Hobsons, Linda Jeal, Polly Lee, William Gorman and Donna Adele. Two years later on the hippodrome track Melville rode a jumping horse in a contest with an Australian galloping pony ridden by Master Alphonse.⁶⁷

In 1902 Frank rode a high school horse, paired with Linda Jeal. In the off season at that time he was breaking stock and looking after the ring barn.

During the Sells Bros. and Forepaugh-Sells years, Louise Melville continued her slack wire act. After 1895 she spent more of her time with high school riding and in 1901 she rode the cake walking horse Black Cat. She also trained and showed eight performing ponies.

Just as in the initial



year of Forepaugh-Sells when Frank Melville served as equestrian director, so he was made circus equestrian director at the New York Hippodrome when it first opened in 1905. At Luna Park in January of that year, he began conducting rehearsals for the Hippodrome's equestrian ballet with four dozen Russian horses. Twenty four of the animals were pure white and the other half were as black as could be found. They were of the royal Orolloff breed. The average weight of these horses was one thousand pounds and their cost was one thousand dollars each. The entire complement of Hippodrome horses numbered one hundred fifty. Other than the Russian horses, the rest were Kentucky thoroughbreds. These were used in the production's war drama.⁶⁸

All of the bareback riders provided their own animals. Oscar Lowande, for instance, was there with his four trained rosin backs as he practiced his midair somersault from one galloping horse to another running in tandem. The Clarkonian family riding act was present with its eight horses.

The Hippodrome Theatre, located on 6th Ave. between 43rd and 44th Streets in New York City, was opened for the first time on the evening of April 12, 1905 with the production, "A Yankee Circus on Mars." The bulky structure of the theatre extended for an entire block along the avenue. On the front corners it had diminutive arabesque towers topped with electrically illuminated globes.⁶⁹

The structure had been designed in an exciting style by Frederic Thompson, who along with Elmer S. Dundy, was the owner and proprietor. These two men were also the owners of Luna Park.

The Hippodrome stage, which could hold 600 persons, was 110 feet deep and 200 feet wide. The back drop curtain was 85 feet by 212 feet and there were 5200 seats for the audience. A basement zoo housed the performing animals. The big cats could be viewed in their glass-fronted cages that flanked one of the promenades.

For 34 years lavish musical and circus attractions for millions of people were produced in this splendidly decorated building. Associated with these productions was a wide variety of entertainers including Anna Pavlova, Vernon and Irene Castle, George M. Cohan, Marie Dressler, Jimmy Durante, Harry Houdini, Billy Rose, John Philip Sousa, Paul

Whiteman, the tragic clowns Slivers Oakley and Marceline, Barlow and his elephants, Claire Heliot and her lions, the Cottrell-Powells, the Heras Family, the Meers Sisters, the Clarkonians, the Ty Bell Sisters and Therese Renz. In honor of this great entertainment center, Sousa composed "The New York Hippodrome March."

The production "Pioneer Days," produced by the Shuberts and M. C. Anderson, opened on November 28, 1906. Included among the performers, in addition to Frank Melville, were William Sitting Bull and one hundred Sioux warriors.

Frank's brother, George, was also employed by the Hippodrome. As mentioned previously, he had last appeared with Frank on Barnum & London in 1883. Continuing as a clown, tumbler and leaper he had been on Barnum and London again in 1885 and on Barnum & Bailey in 1893. He also travelled with Miller, Okley & Freeman in 1886. In 1889 he closed with Kellar at Dockstader's and the following year in Brooklyn he disposed of his interest in the production "Kajanke" to Miller Bros., but remained under salary as a clown.⁷⁰

Now he was again associated with Frank in the same organization. A new production, "Sporting Days," opened on October 10, 1908. Among the personnel in the cast was George

Frank Melville in his riding days. Al Conover collection.



Melville.⁷¹ He also assisted his brother in directing the circus productions.

On the evening of November 23rd George was substituting for his brother when Frank Melville dropped dead of heart disease in his office at the Hippodrome.⁷² Four elephants had arrived recently from Europe for a new circus spectacle and Frank, although feeling ill, had returned to his office to arrange for a permit to lead the elephants through the city streets the next day from the White Star Lines dock. While engaged in conversation about this matter with Samuel Bleyer, purchasing agent of the house, he slid to the floor and died without regaining consciousness. People walking through the corridor just outside of his open office door during the mid-show intermission had no hint of what had happened. With his wife, Frank had been attached to the Hippodrome since its beginning. He was survived by Louise but by no children.

Frank Melville had been for many years a prominent feature of leading circuses in both hemispheres. His excitedly brave and thrilling acts in the arena had drawn stormy applause from the public wherever he appeared. He was a most finished artist who, with incomparable horsemanship, attained an uncommon eminence. He was thoroughly versed in every department of the circus and as an equestrian director had few equals.

Louise Boshell Melville, Frank's widow, died at the age of 78 on October 15, 1934 at Jacksonville, Florida.⁷³ She was survived by one brother Arthur; a niece, Mrs. Hayden Stevens; and a nephew, James A. Boshell.

In later years George D. Melville became the equestrian director for circus presentations at the New York Hippodrome. He died in the spring of 1917 at the age of sixty.⁷⁴ Having married Anna Morgan of Brooklyn in 1876, he was survived by a son, Frank Melville, and by two stepsons, W. C. and George F. Miller.

Although professionally the families of James and Frank Melville were small and relatively short lived, the contributions of these two men were great. Slightly preceding the era of the horse to horse somersault and the stirring presentations of great family riding acts, both father and son set standards in showmanship that became the guide lines for the riders and equestrian directors who followed.

Notes

1. *Sydney Morning Herald*, December 24, 1850.

2. I have not been able to substantiate Thayer's assertion that Melville made his first appearance with Malcom earlier than September 1851.

3. *New York Clipper*, November 26, 1892, p. 611. T. Allston Brown in his *History of the American Stage*, New York: Dick and Fitzgerald, 1870, cites Melville's original name as Crawford, for which I can find no corroborating evidence. I have not been able to independently verify Melville's birth date as quoted by Brown, but it does not appear unreasonable.

4. *Sydney Sportsman*, January 8, 1908.

5. "Training a Circus Rider," *New York Times*, February 17, 1881.

6. *Illustrated Sydney News*, June 30, 1855; *New York Times*, February 17, 1881. The only other aspect of Melville's account that might be questioned is his assertion of an apprenticeship of seven years. It is probable that Melville served an apprenticeship of only two or three years.

7. An analysis of the advertised programs in the *Sydney Morning Herald* for the Royal Australian Equestrian Circus during its first six months, from October 1850 to June 1851, reveals the extraordinary range of Jones' performing ability. In addition to filling the role of riding master, Jones' repertoire embraced dancing (Clog Dance, An Irish Jig, The Irish Hilt, Nautical Dance and The Sailor's Hornpipe); acrobatics as one of the "6 wonderful acrobats;" tightrope ("daring feats" on the tightrope, dancing on tightrope, and jumping through hoops and over gates and garters during the course of his performance); single acts of horsemanship (the *Africa Slave Unfettered*, *The Brave Scotch Laddie*, *The Drunken Hussar*, *The Farmer's Boy*, *The Galley Slave*, *Hassan's Retreat*, *The High Mettled Racer*, *The Indian Vault*, *The Irish Rake*, *The Last of All Mohicans*, *The Man of Intellect*, *Man O' War's Man*, *The Marmes Farewell*, *The Mameluke's Retreat*, *The Miller and his Men*, *The Peasant's Frolic*, *The Punchinello*, *Reuben's Flight*, *The Sailor's Delight*, *The Sailor's Return*, *The Shipwrecked Sailor*, *The Tar of all Weathers*, *The Wild Indian of the Red Desert*, *Too Late for Drill* [or *Sketches in the Life of a Soldier*] and *The White Man's Flight*); double acts of horsemanship with Madam Louise—probably Miss Howard, also known as Maria Louise Fawcett, in *The Sylph of the Mountain*, *The Tyrolean Shepherd and the Swiss Milkmaid* and *The Aerial Messenger*; with Miss Griffiths in *The Caledonians and The Barbarians*; with Master Bird, his pupil, in the equestrian ballets *Little Bo-Peep*, *The Flight of Ru*



Frank Melville, equestrian director of Barnum & Bailey in 1903. Circus World Museum collection.

bini & Corinto, *The Indian Horses and The Corsairs*; a three horse act called *The Young Collegian Let Loose*; various unnamed equestrian act such as a "daring act of equestrianism without without saddle or bridle," a "daring act of horsemanship in which he will assume six different characters," "Leaping through single and double hoops on the horse at full speed," "daring feats on two horses," "riding four spirited horses," and "surprising riding scenes;" clowning in "the very popular act of *The Recruiting Sargent* by Master Bird," and in "the comic act of horsemanship entitled *The Waterman's Delight*; and as a harlequinade in a pantomime. *Sydney Morning Herald*, June 14, 1852; August 2, 1852. Thomas Bird was to become a major figure in Australian Circus in the 1870s as one of the partners in Bird & Taylor's Great American Circus. Bird is known to have spent some years in the United States and Mexico in the late 1850s and early 1860s.

8. *Sydney Morning Herald*, September 18, 1854.

9. The marriage between James Munro (sic) and Elizabeth Louise Mills took place at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Sydney on July 29, 1854 by special license (NSWAO, Vol. 73, No. 2539). Several weeks later, on September 6, 1854, the birth of a son was announced to "the wife of J. Melville Munroe (sic)" at Phillip Street in the *Sydney Morning Herald* of September 18.

10. *Cornwall Chronicle*, December 30, 1848. Elizabeth Louise Mills may somehow have been connected to the horseman

"H. Mills" who appeared in Radford's as an actor and equestrian during most of 1848 and 1849 and who made a brief series of appearances in Ashton's Royal Amphitheatre as an equestrian ("the oldest equestrian performer in Launceston") in Launceston in 1851. *Cornwall Chronicle*, April 12, 1851.

11. *Sydney Morning Herald*, February 21, 1851; March 1, 1851; March 15, 1851.

12. NSW marriages, Vol. 73, No. 2539; and Vol. 81, No. 832.

13. *The Argus*, September 11, 1854. H. P. Lyons quoted in *Sydney Sportsman*, January 8, 1908. De Vere, the pseudonym of Charles Dingley (1823-1868), made his debut at the Amphitheatre on October 30, 1854, according to the *Argus*. His obituary in the *New York Clipper* of August 8, 1868, p. 142, mentioned that he "was a good versatile performer. He could play clown, go in the leap and tumble, but his specialty was the slack rope, in all of which he was very good. But like a great many unfortunate persons in various branches of the profession, he enjoyed the by no means pleasant appellation of being a 'Jonah' . . . a person who has become spotted by the entire profession as bad luck to have with a show. To engage him is a dead certainty of the concern going up in a balloon before the season is half over." The course of Astley's Amphitheatre in Melbourne would not have detracted from Dingley's reputation in his regard. Interestingly, Dingley's last years in American circus were spent in the employment of the circus of the expatriate Australian equestrian.

14. Probably the Francisco Olivira who had arrived in Australia with J. S. Noble in 1851.

15. *The Argus*, November 6, 1854.

16. *The Argus*, November 15, 1854; *The Age*, November 14, 1854.

17. *The Age*, December 1, 1854.

18. *Goulburn Herald*, July 28, 1855.

19. *Moreton Bay Courier*, December 15, 1855.

20. The issuance of a license to James Melville for "equestrian performances" is recorded in the Colonial-Secretary's Register of License, 1821-1863, contained on NSW Archives Office Reel 23314/5784, p. 291.

21. *Moreton Bay Courier*, December 22, 1855.

22. *Sydney Morning Herald*, February 14, 1856; March 26, 1856.

23. *New York Times*, February 17, 1881. The visit to Chile that Melville mentions presumably took place en route to California. The date 1846 is given in the article but this obviously is a misprint for 1856. I have not been able to ascertain the date of their departure from Australia, nor the ship upon which they voy-

aged to South America. Stuart LeR. Thayer, *Annals of the American Circus, Volume 3, 1848-1860*, Seattle: Dauven & Thayer, 1986.

24. The company was at St. Louis, Missouri, July 20-23, 1861, according to an item in the *New York Clipper* of November 11, 1911, p. 2.

25. Lyons, *op. cit.*

26. *New York Times*, February 17, 1881.

27. Thayer, *op. cit.*, p. 240; Harry Cole, "Circus March of Time," *Banner Line*, January 1, 1972; Lee & Bennett Great North American Circus, newspaper ad for 1857 at Circus World Museum (hereafter CWM); John A. Dingess, Untitled and undated manuscript held in the Hertzberg Circus Collection at San Antonio Public Library.

28. Thayer, *op. cit.*, p. 265; Rowe's Pioneer Circus 1857 newspaper ad at CWM.

29. Thayer, *op. cit.*, pp. 99, 237-238.

30. Thayer, *op. cit.*, pp. 268-269; Nixon & Co.'s Circus 1859 newspaper ad at CWM; *New York Clipper*, May 21, 1859, May 4, 1889.

31. Thayer, *op. cit.*, p. 256; Goodwin & Wilder's Circus 1861 program at CWM; H. H. Conley, "Circus History of the Midwest During the Civil War," *White Tops*, February-March, 1942, p. 7.

32. *New York Clipper*, August 9, 1862; Mabie Bros. Circus 1862 newspaper ad at CWM.

33. Conley, *op. cit.*, p. 8; *New York Clipper*, November 4, 1911; George Chindahl papers at CWM.

34. *New York Clipper*, February 18, 1865, p. 10; December 30, 1865; *Banner Line*, September 15, 1967.

35. *New York Clipper*, February 17, 1912, p. 10; March 2, 1912, p. 10; March 23, 1912; *Billboard*, December 13, 1924, p. 119.

36. *Circus Scrap Book*, January 1931; *New York Clipper*, May 18, 1912; October 27, 1866.

37. John Van Matre, "John Stickney's Great Empire City Circus," *Banner Line*, November 15, 1983.

38. Chindahl papers; G. F. Bailey & Co. 1867 newspaper ad at CWM.

39. Dingess, *op. cit.*; G. F. Bailey & Co. 1867 newspaper ad at CWM; Barnum and London 1885 route book at CWM.

40. Yankee Robinson Circus 1868 newspaper ad at CWM.

41. L. B. Lent's New York Circus 1869-1871 newspaper ads and 1871 herald at CWM; *New York Clipper*, October 2, 1869.

42. *New York Clipper*, September 30, 1871.

43. P. T. Barnum Circus 1872 newspaper ad at CWM; G. F. Bailey & Co. 1873 newspaper ad at CWM; *Billboard*, November 1, 1930; *New York Clipper*, April 17, 1875, p. 1 of supplement; June 24, 1876.

44. *New York Clipper*, July 17, 1875;



Mr. and Mrs. Frank Melville on Barnum & Bailey in 1903. Circus World Museum collection.

September 25, 1875; April 29, 1876; John Van Matre, Untitled article in *Bandwagon*, December 15, 1944.

45. John H. Murray's Circus 1878 newspaper ad at CWM; *New York Clipper*, May 2, 1885, p. 10.

46. *Banner Line*, May 15, 1963, p. 7; March 1, 1968; W. C. Coup Circus 1879-1881 newspaper ads at CWM; Stuart Thayer, *Mud Shows and Railers, the American Circus in 1879*, Ann Arbor, Michigan: The author, 1971.

47. W. C. Coup Circus 1881 herald and program; Barnum & London Circus 1882 program, route book, and herald; Adam Forepaugh Circus 1884 courier, all at CWM.

48. *New York Clipper*, November 26, 1892, p. 611.

49. J. Cannon with Mark St. Leon, *Get a Drum and Beat It: The Story of the Astonishing Ashtons*, Sydney: The author, unpublished manuscript, 1995.

50. *New York Clipper*, October 27 1866; July 17, 1875, p. 127; May 5, 1877; June 16, 1877; December 1, 1877; August 17, 1878; G. F. Bailey & Co. 1867 and 1873 newspaper ads; L. B. Lent's New York Circus 1870 and 1871 newspaper ads; P. T. Barnum Circus 1872 newspaper ad; Howes' Great London Circus 1876 newspaper ad; Adam Forepaugh Circus 1878 newspaper ad, all at CWM.

51. Thayer, *Mud Shows*, *op. cit.*

52. *Banner Line*, October 1, 1954, p. 6, Great London Circus 1879 herald at CWM.

53. *New York Clipper*, April 26, 1879, p. 39; W. C. Coup Circus 1879 newspaper ad at CWM.

54. Great London Circus 1880 herald at CWM; Chindahl papers.

55. Barnum and London Circus 1881 route book and program at CWM; *New York Clipper*, April 2, 1881; April 30, 1881; September 10, 1881.

56. W. C. Coup Circus 1882 newspaper ad at CWM.

57. Charles Bernard, "Old Time Showman," *Billboard*, August 25, 1934, p. 95.

58. Barnum and London Circus 1883 program, route book and herald at CWM.

59. Barnum and London Circus 1883 program and route book at CWM; *New York Clipper*, September 23, 1882.

60. *New York Clipper*, October 20, 1883, p. 510; January 12, 1884, p. 740; February 2, 1884, pp. 782-783; April 26, 1884, pp. 87, 94; November 8, 1884, pp. 537, 545.

61. *New York Clipper*, March 14, 1885, pp. 832-833; June 20, 1885, p. 215.

62. *New York Clipper*, January 2, 1886, p. 663; February 6, 1886, p. 740; May 22, 1886; September 25, 1886, p. 443; February 5, 1887; February 18, 1888, p. 784; June 30, 1888, p. 251; September 14, 1889, p. 443.

63. *New York Clipper*, April 19, 1890, p. 85; November 8, 1890, p. 558; November 22, 1890, p. 587; Barnum and Bailey Circus 1890 route book, herald, and program; Barnum and Bailey 1891 route book; Barnum and Bailey 1894 route book; Sells Bros. 1893 route book, all at CWM.

64. *San Francisco Examiner*, undated article; Barnum and Bailey Circus 1903 program at CWM; *Billboard*, November 8, 1902; November 29, 1902; March 28, 1903; November 5, 1904; Barnum and Bailey Circus 1904 program, route book, herald at CWM.

65. *New York Clipper*, March 25, 1893; October 28, 1893; Sells Bros. 1893 and 1895 route books at CWM.

66. Forepaugh-Sells programs, route books, and heralds for period 1896-1902, all at CWM; *Billboard*, January 19, 1901; June 15, 1901; August 2, 1902; November 8, 1902; November 29, 1902.

67. Orin C. King, "Only Big Show Coming: The Nation's Show there is No Other," *Bandwagon*, March-April, 1996.

68. *Banner Line*, October 1, 1984; *Billboard*, January 7, 1905, p. 10.

69. N. Clarke, *The Mighty Hippodrome*, Cranbury, New Jersey: A. S. Barnes & Co., 1968, pp. 19-144.

70. Frank Melville's obituary in the New York City press for November 24, 1908; Barnum and London Circus 1885 program and route book at CWM; *New York Clipper*, September 25, 1886, p. 436; March 16, 1889, p. 13; February 1, 1890, p. 776; Barnum and Bailey Circus 1893 program and route book at CWM.

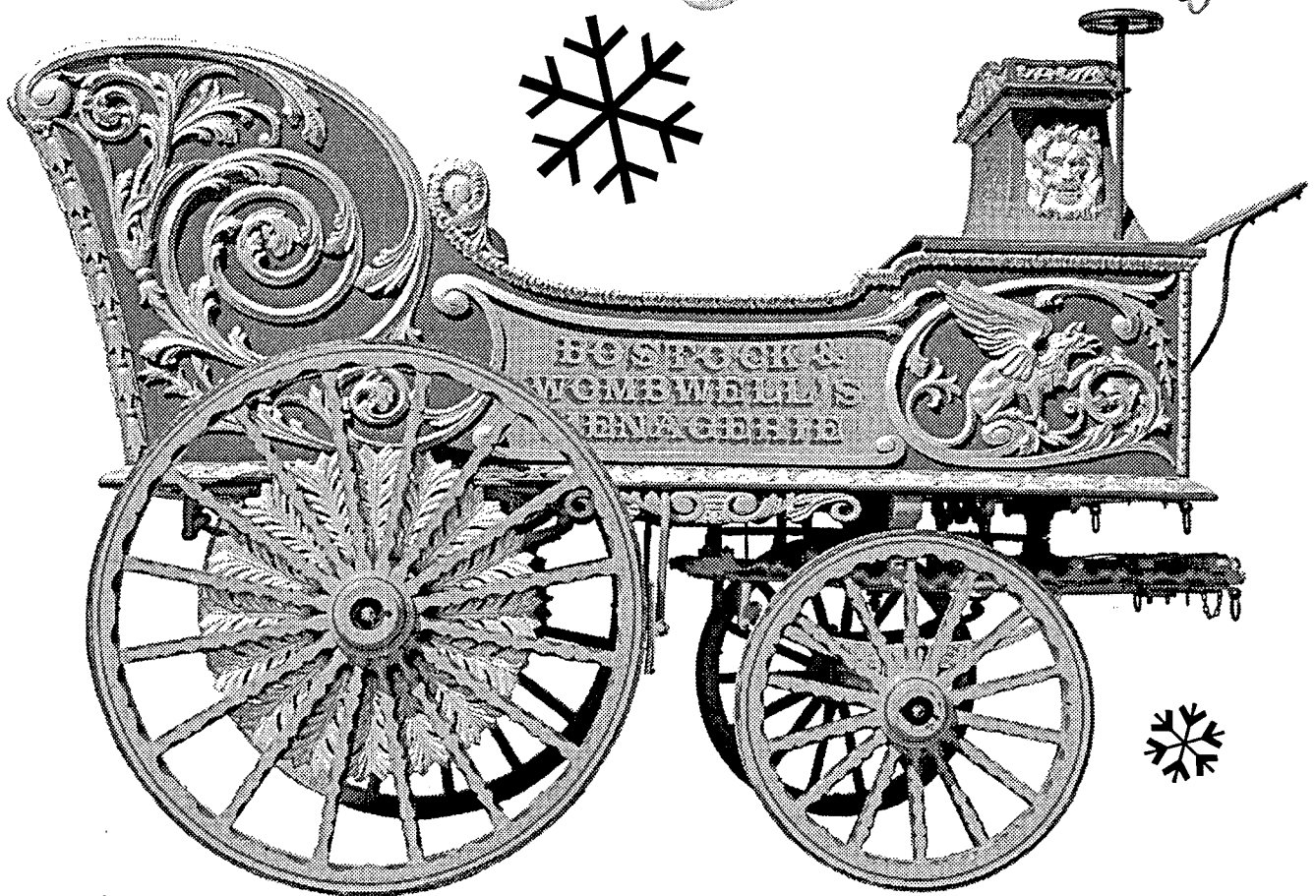
71. Clarke, *op. cit.*

72. *New York Clipper*, November 28, 1908, p. 1037; *Show World*, November 18, 1908, p. 3; *Billboard*, December 5, 1908, pp. 60, 84.

73. *Billboard*, November 3, 1904, p. 30.

74. *New York Clipper*, January 29, 1876; *Billboard*, April 14, 1917.

Season's Greetings



From The Staff



John & Brigitte Pugh, along with the entire
Staff and Cast
of the

CLYDE BEATTY- COLE BROS. CIRCUS

Wish You
a Merry
Christmas
AND
HAPPY NEW YEAR



Foreword

Bandwagon has published histories of many small and medium size motorized circuses of the 1930s. In 1933 when the Great Depression began to ease somewhat, many showmen, believing that prosperity was around the corner, returned to the circus business. A flood of new shows went out. Some lasted only a few months, others a season or two. The Charles X. Allen's shows were typical of the latter. Information and illustrations are difficult to find on many of these companies. Those operated by Allen were no exception. *Billboard* accounts were sparse and no complete routes have been found, but fortunately we have not only an eyewitness, but someone who was in the performance. Harold Barnes, a well known former circus performer, was with Beverly Bros. in 1934.

1933

Charles X. Allen and his brother Meritt M. Allen were associated with Allen Bros. Wild West Circus for several years during the late 1920s and early 1930s. The Sturtevant files list 1927 as the first season. Their father C. M. Allen was with them during the early years. The Allen outfit was a medium sized motorized wild west show featuring some circus acts.

Charles X. Allen left the family show to form his own outfit in 1933 under title of All's Wild West and Beverly Circus. The meaning of both names is not known. Where the show was framed also is not known. It might have been at Woodstown, New Jersey, where it opened on May 1. Brother Meritt toured his own show using the Allen Bros. title in 1933.

It appears the brothers originally planned to tour a single show in

This semi probably carried the big top canvas, poles and seats. Circus World Museum collection.

The Charles X. Allen Shows ALL'S WILD WEST & BEVERLY CIRCUS BEVERLY BROS. CIRCUS

By Joseph T. Bradbury

1933. The February 18 *Billboard* noted the Allen Bros. Wild West Circus was stored at Cambridge, Maryland and would open in May. The show was to have 15 trucks, a new six pole big top, and a band. A week later *Billboard* said George Stoltz and his band would be with the Allen and Beverly Wild West and Circus. This was the first mention of the name Beverly in the trade publication.

There were no accounts or advertisements published about the new Charles X. Allen show until the June 10 *Billboard*: "All's Wild West and Beverly Bros. Circus, which opened at Woodstown, New Jersey on May 1, has been on Long Island for a few weeks. Business has been good despite inclement weather. Big top is a 60 with three 30s, side show a 50 with two 30s. The program opens with an exact copy of an Indian Sun dance. Among those with the outfit are Jay Davis, roper and handling banners; Texas Kid Camp, steer riding; E. Parke Brown, chaplain; Floyd Moser, boss canvasman; Gregory, manager side show; Kirk Adams, pony ride; the Beckleys who have concessions; John Woods, popcorn privilege; W. R. Jones, novelties; Aerial Lakes and Aerial LaZellas; Ted Church, producing clown, assisted by four joeys. Joe Brown is in charge of cookhouse. The writer, George Stoltz, has an eight piece cowboy band and is mail agent." Only one date was listed in that issue, Baldwin, Long Island, New York, June 21.

From the June 24 *Billboard*: "All's Wild West and Beverly Circus wants

billposters who can drive; man to take care of light plant; clowns and acts. State salary. Make it low. No money advanced. Address care *Billboard*, 6th Floor, Palace Theater Building, 1564 Broadway, New York." A week later the show advertised for musicians on all instruments. "Make sal-

ary low."

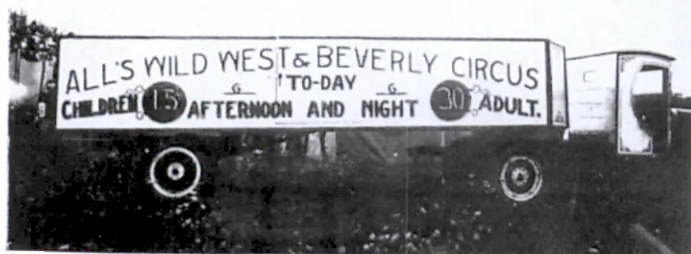
The show probably moved on about eight to ten show-owned vehicles. Photos picture a large semi painted a light color, maybe silver, lettered "All's Wild West & Beverly Circus. To-Day. Afternoon and night. Children 15 cents. Adult 30 cents." The semi could have been used for downtown bally with the band; however, another photo shows an auto with a loudspeaker with a banner on top giving the show title and "afternoon and night." A hand lettered sign on side of the car named the stand, time and location. Photos indicate the show had a new looking four center pole big top and a three pole side show of older canvas.

The show ran very few of its dates in *Billboard*. Those listed for July included Florida, New York, July 12; Warwick, July 13; and Greenwood Lake, July 14. By July 26 it was in New Jersey at New Egypt.

An advertisement in the August 5 *Billboard* read, "All's Wild West & Beverly Circus wants. Circus acts, clowns, musicians, team doing specialties for concert. State your salary, make it low. Address care *Billboard*, 1564 Broadway, New York."

The August 19 *Billboard* published a short article: "All's Wild West & Beverly Circus has been playing the eastern towns of New Jersey to very good business. Weather the first three days last week cut down matinee attendance.

This Austin car was used as a downtown bally. Circus World Museum collection.



"The outfit has bought two new trucks. Equipment is painted silver and green with red and blue lettering. Show is now making from 50 to 150 mile jumps and is headed for the central states.

"Wilbur Baughman has joined with ten piece band. A public address system covers the town and makes plenty of noise on the lot. Gregory's side show has added four new banners. Business has been fair on the season." Apparently Carl Stoltz and his band had left the show.

Herald used by the All Wild West in 1933. Pfening Archives.

By August 16 the show was in Moravia, New York. Allen advertised in the September 16 *Billboard* wanting aerial and ground acts, trombone and baritone. "Don't write, wire your lowest, must join on wire. 3029 West 48th St. Cleveland, Ohio."

Nothing further came in the trade publication about the All show until the September 23 issue which published the final three stands of the season in the route column. The dates were all in Ohio: Clyde, September 21; Norwalk, 22 and Wellington, 23.

The October 7 *Billboard* told of the show's closing: "Charles X. Allen ends his organization's tour. Wellington, Ohio, September 30. All's Wild West and Beverly Circus brought its tour to a close last Saturday (September 23) and attaches immediately started placing the paraphernalia in winter quarters.

"Manager Allen advises that the show closed its season on the right side of the ledger and all employees were paid in full, including the hold-backs, and that many acts were re-engaged for the next season. Jimmie Gunn, Frank Stroud, and Texas Kid

WAIT! WAIT! WAIT!
COMING
ALL'S WILD WEST
AND
BEVERLY CIRCUS
ADMISSION ONLY
10c FOR CHILDREN UNDER 10 YEARS
ADULTS 25c
Largest Show of It's Kind Motorized

TRICK RIDING, ROPING,
 BUCKING STEER RIDING,
 BUCKING FORD,
 RIDING INDIANS
 THRILLS AND
 PASTIME OF THE
 WEST IN THE
 EARLY DAYS

A Number of New Wonderful
 Circus Acts and Clowns who
 Will Keep You Laughing.

WE DO NOT PARADE
BUT LISTEN FOR
OUR COWBOY BAND
NEAR THE NOON HOUR

THINK OF IT CHILDREN--A BIG
WILD WEST and CIRCUS FOR ONLY 10c
ADULTS --- 25c

THE
ORIGINAL
BUCKING
Automobile
BUCKS LIKE
A Texas Bucking Horse

WAIT! WAIT! WAIT!
 ANY ONE ACT OF THIS SHOW IS WELL WORTH THE ADMISSION PRICE--COMING SOON!
Water-proof CANVAS

following season. Generally 1933 was much better for many shows than the prior several seasons. Ringling owned shows were now under control of Sam Gumpertz who represented Allied Owners which bought John Ringling's note to title from Prudence Company after he had forfeited a loan payment due in July 16, 1932. All three circuses in the Ringling organization had better seasons. Ringling-Barnum, on 90 cars, had its best season since 1929. Hagenbeck-Wallace, now using 40 cars with Jess Adkins as manager, had a good year,

Camp and some helpers remained here to handle the equipment storage. According to reports no motor trouble was encountered during the tour except a flat tire on one of the units.

"Some the show personnel visited the grave of C. M. Allen, father of Charles and Merritt, during the recent engagement at Medina, Ohio, one time home or quarters of a wild west show of which Charles X. Allen was half owner and where heavy attendance was recorded.

"Allen informs he will take out the show next year as Beverly Bros. Wild West Circus with the big top enlarged to 180 x 60 feet and will open here."

There is no doubt the show finished the season in the black because of the plans made to enlarge for the

and Al G. Barnes, on 30 cars, had a better season than the previous year. No major show failed, in marked contrast to previous years.

For the rest of 1933 very little news came from Allen. In late October *Billboard* reported that James Davis, late of the advance of All's Wild West, and wife motored southward at the close of the season, going to Houston, Texas, to launch a winter outfit titled Davis & Sons Shows.

In early November Edward Reed, who worked banners with All's Wild West, was doing banners and newspaper work for a walkathon at Highland Park, New Brunswick, New Jersey.

1934

First news of the new Beverly Bros. Circus came in the March 10 *Billboard* which reported Floyd L. Quinn had been engaged as general agent.

The March 24 *Billboard* piece was headed "The Barnes to Beverly Bros. Circus. Cincinnati, March 21. An erroneous report appeared in last issue that Mr. and Mrs. Clint Barnes and son Harold would be with Allen Bros. Wild-West Circus this year. Instead, they have been signed by Beverly Bros. Circus with which Harold will be featured as the youngest somersaulting wire walker and do foot slide and trapeze.

"Mrs. Irene Kadel Barnes underwent an operation at Miami last week, hence may not join the show, at least for its early season. Allen is getting out special paper for Harold Barnes."

The April 14 *Billboard* contained a photo of a side view of the new band truck with Beverly Bros. Circus. The cutline said it had been built by Kirk Adams who with his wife would be with the show. Besides scroll work embellishments and paintings there were 286 glass pieces panelled around the body of the vehicle. Two of Adams' ponies appeared in the photo. The truck would haul all Ad-

The All side show and big top in 1933. Circus World Museum collection.





The truck built by Kirk Adams in 1934. It later appeared on a number of other circuses. Pfening Archives.

ams' animals and props and would pull a small living trailer.

The same issue carried an ad wanting clowns, aerial team doing three or more acts, cook, cowboys and cowgirls, boss canvasman, bill-posters, concessions to rent, candy stand and photos, candy butcher, working men in all departments, "acts with own transportation preferred." The address listed was Fairgrounds, Wellington, Ohio.

The show opened April 28 at Wellington. The *Billboard* carried no opening review nor anything else. There was nothing in the trade publication about the new Beverly Bros. Circus for several weeks. The show played Ravenna, Ohio on May 3 and nothing further is known of the route until the show reached Connecticut in early June. There was a large concentration of shows in southern New England in the early spring.

In Circus Solly's column "Under the Marquee" in the June 16 *Billboard*, J. B. Swafford, general agent, Lewis Bros. Circus, reported he had visited many shows in New England including World Bros. at Fort Adams, Massachusetts; Gorman Bros. at Providence, Rhode Island; Downie Bros. at Waterbury, Connecticut and Beverly Bros. at Windsor Locks, Connecticut. The July-August *White Tops* mentioned that CFA Barlow L. Bogue, of Norwich, Connecticut visited Beverly Bros. Circus at Putnam, Connecticut and had a fine visit with manager Charles Allen and Jack Sampson. He was again on the show at Jewett City and Baltic in his home state. Bugs Raymond played bass drum for the side show band, Bogue noted.

Earlier *White Tops* had this to say, "Harold Barnes, the young wire walker on Beverly Bros., is worth watching and is outstanding now as a youngster and in a few years will be the equal of any. He works without pole or balance of any kind."

Later Beverly Bros. played in Rhode Island and then made a hasty exit from New England as on May 21 it played Washington, New Jersey.

Photos taken in Washington show the circus moved on about 15 trucks. One large semi is pictured, the same one used in 1933 on All's Wild West, but now painted a dark color, probably red. It was titled Beverly Bros. Circus in large letters. Another vehicle was a well decorated large four wheel trailer with a fold up "Big Show Tickets" sign. A small trailer was used for the cookhouse. The big top had four center poles and new canvas. The side show had a good looking six banners. The most photographed vehicle on the show was Kirk Adams' band truck. Close ups show the center painting was of a buffalo (bison) cow and calf.

Allen advertised in the June 24 *Billboard* wanting circus acts, circus musicians on all instruments, and a wild animal act.

In early June it was announced the title was changed to Jones Bros. Wild West Circus. This report was in error

The Beverly Bros. big top on the ground in Washington, New Jersey on May 21, 1934. Circus World Museum collection.



as there was no further reference to Charles Allen using the Jones title during the season. There was a Jones Bros. Wild West on tour in 1934 operated by Biff Jones. Brother Merritt also used the Jones Bros. title in 1934.

The show advertised in the July 7 *Billboard* wanting "High powered and fast stepping agent. Must be well-known, and have car. Want ticket sellers ahead, high powered promoters. Must deliver the goods. If you just think you can, don't answer. Address Beverly Bros. Circus, care *Billboard*, New York City."

The show advertised often for help in every department. Many circuses had a high turnovers of personnel in those days. Often these ads would use a gimmick to discourage incompetent personnel, especially those who wouldn't last. Often it was stated that tourists, forty milers, grifters, drunks, and wise guys shouldn't answer. Allen told "would bees" to lay off and those who just thought they can to not answer, a little different twist but with the same message.

The July 21 *Billboard* said that a recent addition to the Beverly Bros. Circus performance was W. C. Richards' elephant Maxine, and the act had been clicking.

W. C. Richards had operated overland circuses in the 1920s and on through 1930 and would again field a show before end of the decade. For several seasons in the 1930s Richards leased his elephant to various shows. In 1937 she was on Rowe Bros. The 1939 Richards Bros. Circus was sold to Jack and Jake Mills to start their well-known Mills Bros. show in 1940.

The June 23 *Billboard* contained this article: "When Beverly Bros. Circus and Wild West exhibited here (Jewett City, Connecticut) recently a little competition was overcome by the assistance of some of the local officials and circus fans. A free band concert was scheduled for between 8 and 9 p.m., which would have undoubtedly hurt the show attendance. Everett Sharkey of the Jewett City police, and circus fans Bogue and Raymond conferred with the commander of the American Legion, which sponsors the Boys' Band, and with his cooperation and that of Irving Bourque, the

bandmaster, the concert was cut short. Also, announcement was made by the circus people that their show would be delayed until after the band concert. As a result, the 45 band boys paraded to the showgrounds, where they were guests of Manager Charles X. Allen, and played several selections inside the tent.

"Beverly Bros. had some very profitable business while in this state. The show played to two capacity houses at Putnam and at North Grosvenordale gave three performances, one in the forenoon, and at Jewett City and Baltic had 'em on the straw. The side show managed by Jack Sampson had good business at these stands. The show travels on about 25 trucks, trailers and autos. The new big top is a 60-foot round top, with three 30s; side-show tent a 50 with two 20s. All equipment is in good shape and newly painted.

"The show is under the direction of Charles X. Allen and Mrs. Allen. Mrs. Allen is in the ticket wagon and Charles Allen's mother on the front door. Performance runs an hour and 30 minutes and features Buck Steele and company in their Wild West acts, and Master Harold Barnes receives special announcements in his flying trapeze and wire act—the latter stops the show. Clown alley is under the direction of Clint Barnes. Helping Buck Steele are Mona Rose, trick riding and rope spinning; Buddy (Smiling) Richards, steer riding; Fred Mott, rope spinning, whip cracking and impalement act; Cowboy Pete, rope spinning and riding; Master Charlie Allen, rope spinning. The band of six pieces is under the direction of Professor Brockman and turns out plenty of music. Tillie Adams handles the pony drill.

"Kirk Adams has the pony rides, and this was one of the busiest stands. He was aided by Mrs. Adams. Pop corn and apple stand is operated by Mr. and Mrs. Abbott and lunch counter and novelties by Mr. and Mrs. Warner. J. M. Bradley has the banners. Advance Agent Quinn has hit the good towns in this territory. Show puts up plenty of paper, with Mr. Koyle at the head or the advertising crew. Re-



Harold Barnes performed on his trapeze in the 1934 Beverly performance. Pfening Archives.

serves are under J. Gunn and Mrs. Steele. Jack Sampson's side show has seven stages and platforms and a nifty bannerline.

"The concert is a minstrel show, with Harold Barnes as interlocutor. Tickets are 5 cents. Harold Barnes does several musical numbers and Clint Barnes puts on a song and dance. Big show admission is 25 cents and reserves 10 cents. Manager Allen does not use merchant's tickets."

In August Beverly Bros. ran ads in *Billboard* that included several dates of the route instead of the *Billboard* address. The August 18 issue contained an ad wanting circus acts, musicians, and mechanics. Dates listed were Riegelsville, Pennsylvania, Thursday; Frenchtown, New Jersey, Friday; Flemington, Saturday; Lambertville, Monday.

The August 25 issue had this:

The Beverly Bros. letterhead was printed on orange paper with the steer head in green and the title in red. Pfening Archives.

"Beverly Bros. Circus. Wants. Circus acts. Cowboys that trick ride and rope. Musicians. Drummer. Will book wild west unit. Want mechanic. Long season South. Sure salary, so make it low. Sellersville, Pennsylvania, Thursday; East Greenville, Friday; Oley, Saturday."

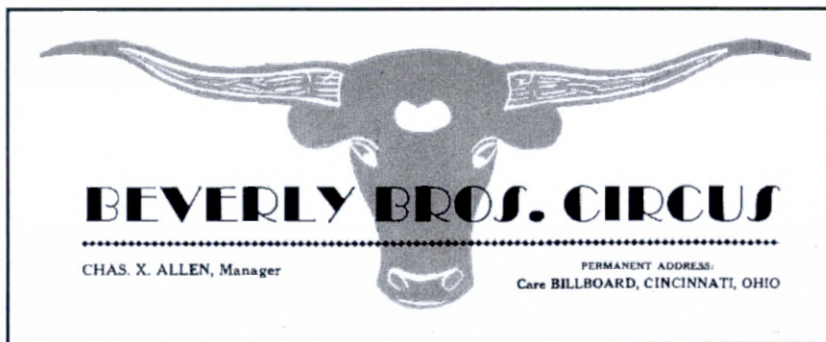
The same issue had this interesting article: "Ed Kelty, well-known circus photographer, has made up an informal list covering his activities from May 7 until August 10. He travelled over 6,000 miles in shooting scenes and groups of the following shows Ringling-Barnum, Hagenbeck-Wallace, Russell Bros., Downie Bros., CFA convention in Norwich, Connecticut, Capt. Schultz's King of Beasts Circus, R. T. Card's Dog & Pony Show, Kay Bros., Lewis Bros., Beverly Bros., Cole & Rogers, Hunt's, Al G. Barnes, Gorman Bros., King Hamid's Circus International in Long Beach, a total of 14 shows. Close to 50 towns were in his itinerary, in New York, Indiana, Missouri, Illinois, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Connecticut, Rhode Island, New Hampshire, and Massachusetts."

Ed Kelty, who operated Century Photo in Brooklyn, created a wealth of circus history in photographs. Unfortunately, too many of his views are now lost. Fortunately, some have survived and are in the hands of institutions and individuals. We are lucky to have the group photo Kelty took of the Beverly Bros. personnel.

Another ad appeared in the September 1 *Billboard*. "Charles A. (sic) Allen wants for Beverly Bros. Circus. Circus acts, cowboys and girls who trick ride and rope, musicians. advertising bannerman, mechanics. useful people in all lines answer. Long season South so make your salaries low in first letter. Henry (mechanic) and Doc Lewis answer. Lititz, Pennsylvania, August 29; Manheim, 30; Elizabethtown, 31; Windsor, September 1; Hagerstown, Maryland, 2 and 3; Gaithersburg, 4."

The show headed southward through Virginia playing Fairfax, September 5; Middleburg, 6; Marshall, 7; Catlet, 8; Louise, 10; Palmyra, 11; and Dillwyn, 12.

Harold Barnes provided the following memories of Beverly Bros.: "Charles X. Allen





The 1934 Kelty photo of Beverly Bros. Circus personnel, identified by Harold Barnes. Bottom row sitting on ground: Two amateur clowns, a working man, and Clint Barnes.

First row seated on chairs: A cowboy's wife; Mrs. Fred Motts; Irene Barnes, my mother; Mrs. Buck Steele; man, unknown; Aunt Kate, Charles Allen's mother; little girl standing is Merling Allen; Rose Allen; Charles X. Allen; Harold Barnes; Tillie Adams, Rose Allen's sister; woman unknown; Little Charley Allen.

Third row standing: Cowboys and bandsmen, names forgotten, except snare drummer Kirk Adams, and baby sitting in bass horn bell, Dean Steele, Buck Steele's son. Harold Barnes collection.

Harold Barnes collection.

and his brother Mert Allen were together many years, framing and booking wild west shows, and dissolved partnership in 1932 or 1933.

"Charley Allen and his wife Rose (later married to Buck Steele) were in Miami the winter of 1933-'34 to confer with Bill Ketrow (Kay Bros. Circus) for ideas in framing a circus which he was to call Beverly Bros. Circus. And to open the spring of 1934 in Ohio.

"At that time he contacted my father to book me for the season. I was to do single trapeze, early in the show, tight wire in the middle and slide for life at the end, before the elephant closer. The elephant was W. C. Richards' 'Maxine.' The elephant handler was Maburn Adair Miller (M. A. Miller), W. C.'s nephew.

"Charley and Rose Allen had a son, younger than I, 'Little' Charley and a younger daughter, Merlene. 'Little' Charley suffered infantile paralysis when he was quite young

but he overcame his handicap and worked in the show riding his pony and working in the rope spinning number.

"The tent was a 70 foot bale ring top with three 30 foot middles and a marquee. A small push-pole side show tent and the usual concession stands were on the midway. Beverly carried a show owned cook house and fed the entire show. It was managed by Charlie Allen's mother, Aunt Kate, who bore the affectionate title of 'Belly-Robbing Kate.' There were several chefs during the season; some being good when they were sober.

"The only truck I remember was Kirk Adam's glass decorated band truck, which took the eight piece band out to bally the towns every day. I beat the bass drum on those downtown ballys.

"Kirk was married to Rose Allen's sister Tillie. They presented a pony drill and a dog act in the show, car-

rying the ponies and dogs in their open air truck which pulled a small house trailer. They also worked the front end; selling and/or taking tickets. They went with Buck Steele to Beers-Barnes a few years later and used the band truck there for ballys.

"I can't remember the number of trucks or the types, but I don't believe any of them were semi-trailers. The elephant truck was a straight job and Miller had living quarters built inside. Charley and Rose Allen had a small, but nice, living trailer; my father and mother had a house car; Fred Motts, who worked whips, and his wife lived in a tent; and I can't remember what Buck Steele, his wife and baby, Dean, lived in. He had a straight job for his stock.

"My mother took tickets on reserved seats and my father Clint was producing clown--all-talking. He had a Jargo, did a clown boxing number and the usual clown numbers. Re-

sorting to his comedy vaudeville background he would usually stop the show with the boxing and Jargo numbers. He had two young amateurs in clown alley whose wardrobe and make-up he supplied. Although the advertising was circus, it was long on wild west with Buck Steele supplying horses and cowboys. Fred Motts did a fabulous Australian whip act, comparable to Billy Waite on the Ringling Show. He was on the Hagenbeck show previous seasons and when Jess Adkins, then manager of Hagenbeck-Wallace, came to visit the show in the middle of the season to sign me up for his new Cole Bros. show to open the following year, he made it a point to go to greet Motts.

"Buck Steele and his men did rope spinning, a number in which I joined occasionally on matinees, and Buck did trick riding on his horse, Prince.

"Charley Allen supplied two long horned steers for riding, Big John and Little John, and two broncos, all ridden by Buck Steele's men, when he had the men. When he didn't, a ten-gallon cowboy hat would be put on a working man and he would ride a bronco until thrown.

"A rope was stretched down the center pole line, dividing the tent in half long-ways with seats only on the front half. Sections of 'blues' were at each end but installed only to the center pole line. The steers and broncos would run down the one side of the tent and out the sidewall.

"The show opened in Wellington, Ohio, and moved east to the New Jersey and Eastern Shore area before going south. As a kid I didn't

Beverly stock truck and sleeper in 1934. Circus World Museum collection.



This four wheeled trailer served as the Beverly Bros. ticket wagon. Circus World Museum collection.

think about good or bad crowds, but the show didn't close because of bad business. Charley Allen was a heavy drinker and was drunk most of the time. Once sleeping off a drunk under a tree, in New Jersey, Elmer Kemp, CFA member and undertaker, wrote out a death certificate, listing the cause of death as women and whiskey, and placed it on his chest. Fred Motts was forced to leave in the middle of the night. His German Shepherd dog which he kept fenced in all the time chewed up a little boy who climbed inside.

"Buck Steele sent his wife home and he and Rose Allen left the show together, taking Rose's daughter Merlene with her. They were later married. When they left, Charley Allen closed the show. After a couple days sitting on the lot we visited a near-by circus and asked for a job. Although they already had three wire acts, they said 'yes' and we slept on their lot that night.

"In the middle of the night M. A. Miller and Charley Allen pounded on our house car and said he would re-open and wished we would return. My father agreed and the next morning we returned to the Beverly Bros. lot and we re-opened the following

Monday with quite a condensed show.

"It went along okay, I guess, but Charley Allen was back on the bottle, worse than before and food in the cook house became inedible. One day after supper my mother saw the cook taking the finished plates and scraping the uneaten potatoes back into the potato pot, the uneaten beans back into the pot, the 'sow belly' slabs back into that pot and so on. When my

mother asked the chef about this his reply was that Aunt Kate told him to do so.

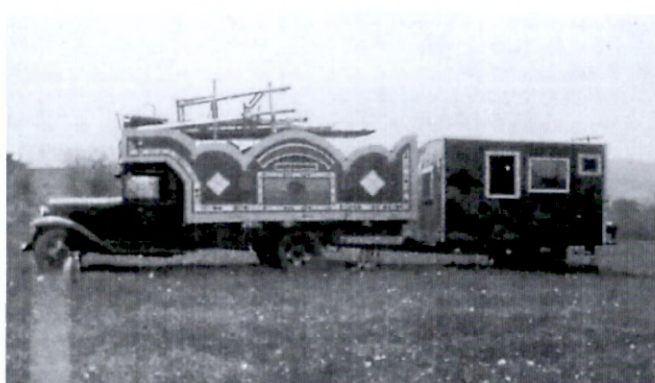
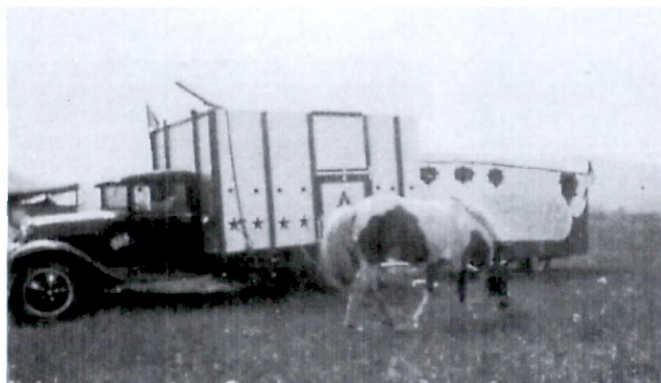
"We then turned in our notice and left. That was either in South Carolina or Georgia. I don't know how much longer he stayed out that season of 1934."

By September 13 the circus was in South Carolina at Georgetown. Three days later it was in Louisville, Georgia, for three days and then returned to South Carolina at Manning. It remained in that state until October 24 when it went back to Georgia at Glennville.

This short note appeared in the September 13 *Billboard*: "Beverly Bros. Circus got a break (or did it) through a newspaper make-up error. In news column stories the headings became switched. The advance circus article got a heading about a 'prominent family gathering.'"

The Circus Fans column in the September 22 *Billboard* noted: "F. E. Loxey, chairman of the Rhode Island top, visited the following circuses during the season: Ringling-Barnum at Boston, May 6; VFW Circus, Providence, May 17; World Bros., Central Falls, Rhode Island, May 16; Gorman

Kirk Adams truck, loaded with props, and living trailer. Circus World Museum collection.



Bros., Providence, May 21; Downie Bros., Fall River, Massachusetts, May 30; Shrine Circus, Pawtucket, Rhode Island, June 4; Kay Bros., Warren, Rhode Island, June 16; Beverly Bros., East Greenwich, Rhode Island, June 16; Allen Bros. Wild West, Worcester, Massachusetts, June 29; Kay Bros., West Warwick, Rhode Island, July 5; Lewis Bros., Connecticut, Rhode Island, July 10; Hagenbeck-Wallace, Providence, July 16; and Card Bros., Lakewood, Rhode Island, August 15."

Other well known motorized circuses on tour in 1934 were: Sam B. Dill-Tom Mix, Barnett Bros., Russell Bros., Seils-Sterling, Mighty Haag, Lewis Bros., Schell Bros., Almond & Conley, Gentry Bros., Seal Bros. and Lee Bros.

Allen advertised in the October 20 *Billboard* for a side show with own transportation, a grab joint, circus acts, cowboys and girls, man and wife doing 3 or more acts. and banner man. "All salaries must be low. Out all winter." Three South Carolina dates were listed.

In the November 10 *Billboard* Allen stated that Beverly Bros. Circus had been in South Carolina four weeks and had very good business. The weather had been ideal. Robert Williams joined with his side show and was getting his share. He had a one hundred foot banner line and used an amplifier for his openings. Fred Guthrie and wife joined, bringing the big show program to 21 acts and 6 clown numbers. Clint Barnes

Banner line of the Beverly side show. Pfening Archives.



Beverly lot scene showing big top on the ground and a titled semi-trailer. Circus World Museum collection.

and family left for Harold to go to school. Mother Allen left to join Jones Bros. Wild West Circus.

Allen advertised in the same *Billboard* for cornet with music, strong trombone, circus acts, good mechanic, advertising banner man, side show concessions all kinds. "Must be winter salary."

The December 1 *Billboard* contained this interesting article: "Gray, Georgia, about 14 miles from Macon, may be regarded as one of the world's worst circus towns. The small village, a county seat, was played on a recent Monday by Beverly Bros. Circus. There was no matinee and at night, according to troupers who visited from Macon, not a single ticket was sold and no performance was given. It was the first instance of its kind in that section and was probably resulting from a very cold spell, troupers said."

No closing date was published in *Billboard* and nothing further appeared in print about Allen or Beverly Bros. in 1934. However a report

stated Beverly closed in Lumber City, Georgia on November 6.

A piece in the December 22 *Billboard* reported indirectly that the show had closed: "Following the closing of Beverly Bros. Circus Fred Guthrie opened with a small show and has

been doing O. K. in Georgia. His mother, Ida, joined and is handling tickets and doing a mental act in concert. Guthrie has 2 trucks, 2 house trailers and a sedan. He expects to stay out all winter.

A search of the early 1935 *Billboards* did not provide any information on the status of the Beverly show.

The February 16 issue reported:

BEVERLY BROS. CIRCUS CONCERT			
ADMIT ONE	Est. Price 21c	25¢	HAVE TICKET READY FOR COLLECTOR
	Fed. Tax 4c		
	TOTAL.....		
			No. 0961

Concert ticket used in 1934. Pfening Archives.

"Jones Bros. Wild West Circus closed its 1934 season at Woodbine, Georgia, December 23. Some equipment was stored in Woodbine. A smaller show using 3 trucks, 3 trailers, and 10 head of stock has been playing small towns with business satisfactory. Meritt Allen and G. R. Page are managers. Charles Allen, Jr. with it does trick roping and works sword box in the side show. A new top, a 50 ft. with four 20's and a 30 ft. middle is on way from Kansas City."

Neither Jones Bros. Wild West nor Beverly Bros. Circus are on the Sturtevant list of circuses touring in 1935. The future activities and fate of the Allen brothers are unknown.

A Charles Allen was in charge of the wild west after show on Si Rubens' Rogers Bros. Circus in 1952. It is unknown if this is the same Charles Allen of Beverly Bros.

In addition to the help given by Harold Barnes we are also appreciative of information supplied by Ted Bowman and the Circus World Museum, Baraboo, Wisconsin.



THE JOHN AND MABLE RINGLING MUSEUM OF ART
AND
Circus Celebrity Committee of the Members Council

☆ HONORS ☆



Gunther Gebel-Williams
Sarasota Circus Celebrity 1998

AND

Willis Lawson Charlie Smith
as Powers Behind the Scenes
6 FEBRUARY 1998

~Past Sarasota Circus Celebrities~

1970	Harold Davis Alzana - high wire	1976	John Herriott - trainer & ringmaster
1970	LaNorma Fox - trapeze	1977	Jack Joyce - animal trainer
1970	Karl Wallenda - high wire	1978	Bill Ballantine - clown, artist & writer
1971	George Hanneford, Sr. - equestrian	1979	Merle Evans - bandmaster
1971	Alfredo Landon - clown	1980	Lou Jacobs - clown
1971	Tarzan Zerbini - animal trainer	1993	Allan C. Hill - showman
1972	Edmondo Zacchini - human cannonball	1994	William & Barbara Woodcock - animal trainers
1972	Lucio Cristiani - equestrian	1995	Nock Family - aerial acts
1973	Emmett Kelly - clown	1996	Rosaire Family - animal trainers
1974	Fay Alexander - trapeze	1997	Dieter Tasso - juggler
1975	Struppi Hanneford - aerialist & trainer		

The Ringling Museum of the Circus
Celebrating 50 Years

Eastern States Exposition
Salutes
Sylvia Zerbini
America's Premier Single Trapeze Artist
Featured in The Big E Super Circus 1997



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(860) 491-3421 Fax (860) 491-9428

MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR TO ALL OUR CIRCUS FRIENDS



Our own "Cinderella" Danielle Commerford, driven by her dad, Bill Commerford in the Grand Parade at Eastern States Exposition.

This paper was presented at the 1997 Circus Historical Society Convention in Northbrook, Illinois.

DEDICATION

The author wishes to dedicate this paper to Captain Benny Kirkbride, the Dean of American Sea Lion Trainers. His thirty five years at the San Diego Zoo is certainly some kind of a record for a wild animal trainer in one venue. His association with Leslie Borinstein and Harold Winston gave him a rich background unavailable today. My forty five year friendship and the hundreds of hours spent watching his performances and training sessions was a truly unique and valued experience.

A Preliminary Study of the Sea Lion Act in the North American Circus

For the first half of the twentieth century, the sea lion act was a staple on any circus able to afford this popular attraction. The name "sea lion" is a misnomer. The animals used in the circus were and are usually sea lions. The true seal has very short front flippers unusable for extended land locomotion. The rear flippers don't rotate under the body or act as rear legs. They are simply drug behind the animal's body. True

The Joseph Woodward sea lion act on Sells Bros. Circus in the 1890s. Circus World Museum collection.

A LOT OF FISH AND A LOT OF PATIENCE

By Charles I. Meltzer

seals land locomotion is accomplished by muscular belly undulation. Their land locomotion and dexterity is restricted. The short, thick neck lacks the articulation so necessary for the nose balancing of objects commonly associated with the sea lion act. Although often billed as performing seals and sea lions, the author has never seen a photograph of both animals together in an American circus act.

The true seal *Phoca Vitulina*¹ or allied species was used both in this country and Europe in very limited presentations, possibly due to their physiology, prior to the development of the sea lion act. The larger front flippers and land-usable rear flippers designate the sea lion as the animals familiar to the circus goer. The *Phocas* or true seals, the walrus, *Odobenys*, *Rosmarus Divergons* and even the huge, or land awkward elephant seal, *Mironga Angustir Oskeris*, are occasionally used in water or tank acts. External ear flaps are exclusive

to the sea lion. The true seal has only a hole in the sides of the head opening into the auditory canal.

Until very recently, the animal usually seen in the North American circus was the California sea lion, *Zalophus Californicus*. This never-endangered subspecies has an extensive range along the western coast of North America. A very conservative population estimation is 70,000 to 150,000. Males may measure 236 cm. in length and weigh approximately 280 kilos. Females, showing the sexual size variation common to the pinnepeds, are much smaller at 180 cm. and 90 kilos. The less tractable, large and more northern occurring Stellar sea lion, *Eumetopius Jubata*,

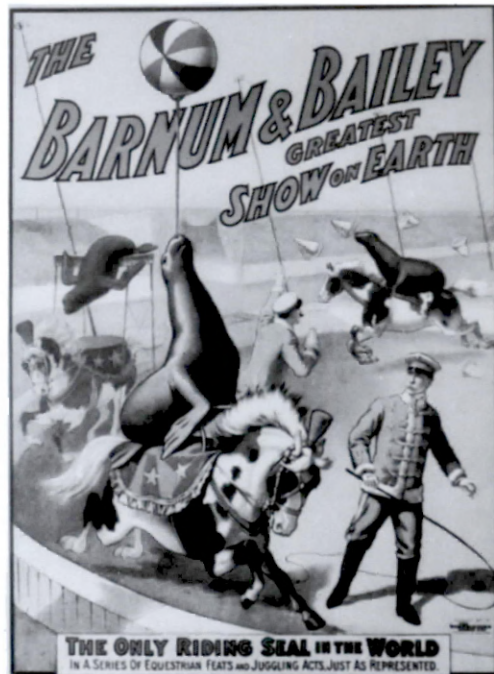
may have been used occasionally. The Patagonian or snub nosed sea lion, *Otaria Byronia*, is often trained in the European-based acts seen in the American circus in recent years.

The basis for sea lion training is their gluttonous appetites. Recently captured animals don't recognize inanimate dead fish as food. Trolling dead fish through water might be necessary to stimulate their normally voracious

appetites. Inattentive and "slow feeders" would be quickly weeded out from the ranks of potentially trainable animals. Those between one and two years of age prove to be easiest to train, but are priced three to four times that of animals for zoo usage.

Initial training is a slow process requiring great concentration on the part of the animal and much patience by the trainer. Many of circusdom's best known trainers bought animals, at least partially trained, from permanent facilities such as zoos, where quiet, non-distracting concentration was possible. It is a rare sea lion that is professionally presentable with less than four months training. Sessions of less than twenty minutes several times a day in a non-detracting environment is a necessity. They are equipped

Riding sea lion litho used by Barnum & Bailey in 1907. Circus World Museum collection.



with very sharp teeth and lighting fast reflexes in order to catch live fish, their wild diet.

Like all wild animals, captive sea lions are not tame. Trainers quickly learn to suffer their very painful bites without jerking back. This normal reaction only tears the puncture wound and alerts the pupil to the success of its attack. They have very tough hides and indulge in a great deal of play-aggression biting in their social interaction. Training is accomplished only with food reward and verbal praise. Some animals will even welcome limited physical contact with the trainer. Untrained pups must become accustomed to their human and animal companions, as well as their new surroundings. Slowly the potential performer learns that the trainer is the sole source of food and not a threat. In order to reinforce this interaction, the food is hand fed by the trainer. This concentrates the student's attention on following the trainer's hand movements. If the animal snaps at the hand, food is withheld and "no" is spoken firmly. The pup has learned its name by repetition. Slowly these basics sink in. Some trainers claimed to work initially with a form of waist high armor to deflect bites. The animal receives a sore mouth and no food for aggressive behavior. Other trainers worked behind a waist high barrier, until the biting attempts diminish. Physical punishment only served to confuse the student and destroy the trust so laboriously achieved. Feeding a cooperative animal in the presence of a belligerent or stubborn animal is another trainer's ploy.

The next step is to teach the animal its "home" pedestal. This is accomplished by the hand baiting of the student with the perennial cube of fish, while repeating the word "sit." Learning to "shake hands" with both flippers is next. This is done by attracting the sea lion's attention with fish held in one hand, while the trainer accustoms the pup to a gentle touch with the other hand on the upper shoulder of the animal's closest flipper. Slowly the trainer moves his hand down the flipper until the animal allows it to be lightly grasped and shaken. This is done with both flippers as

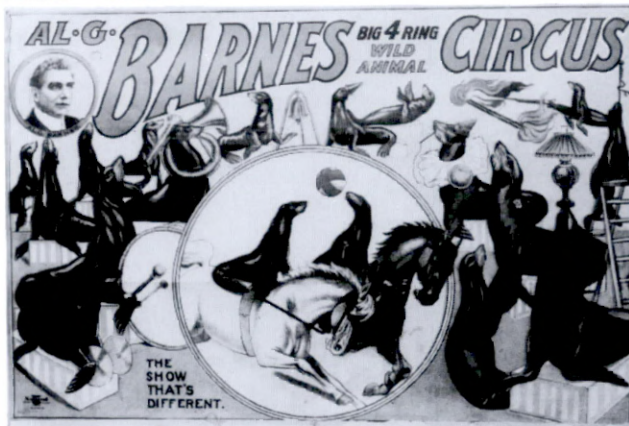


Winston's seals on Barnum & Bailey in 1912. Ken Harck collection.

the trainer uses verbal and hand pointing cues until the animal will present either flipper on command. Reward is fish and the usual "shower of praise." The well known "clapping" is then accomplished by cueing the animal to present both flippers simultaneously. Rolling over is accomplished by the on-ground presentation of a flipper as in a handshake and pulling the animal over gently, finally followed by reward. Praying and saluting are extension tricks of hand shaking and applause. Few other animals could learn so many minor extensions of the same basic trick without confusion. Verbal and hand cues must be very precise and repeated until they become second nature.

In the wild, no sea lion has ever been observed, according to any reliable source, balancing anything on its nose, to the author's knowledge. To teach the nose ball balance, the novice becomes accustomed to a hand-held ball over its head. The animal will follow the movement of the

Seal act litho used by Al G. Barnes in the mid-1920s. Ken Harck collection.



ball while in the hands of the trainer, the sole source of the all-important fish. When the pup's attention starts to waver, the trainer gives a short whistle, removes the hand-held ball from the student's nose and promptly rewards the sea lion. The pup learns that the trainer is controlling the ball. It must learn to tolerate the ball on its nose for a period of time. The ball is then attached to a string which in turn is tied to a stick held in the trainer's hand. The ball is then lowered over the pup's upturned head and is rested on its nose as long as the pup will tolerate it. As the animal's attention starts to waiver, the trainer must quickly whistle and raise the ball. This imprints trainer control, keeping the animal from quickly throwing the ball at its discretion. Whistle control is called "bridging." When bridging is not properly taught the animal will not hold the ball for any length of time. Some poorly trained sea lions don't balance a ball at all. They only "bat" it back to the trainer. Branching out to batons, parasols, prop bottles and wine glasses is relatively easy after ball balancing has been properly learned. Close up photographs occasionally show the animals stiff, upwardly rotated whiskers assisting in ball balancing.

Going up and down stairs, crossing a tight rope or plank, rolling on a drum or ball are all taught by the animal following the fish in the trainer's hand. Verbal and body cues are slowly incorporated. Such tricks as front and rear flipper stands are trainer assisted. These can only be accomplished when the pup has lost its natural fear of the trainer. The education of these very bright animals has been compared to the training of some highly strung, snappy, stubborn, but brilliant dogs with a dangerous bite and a nearly insatiable appetite.

The training reward was usually chunks of fish, carefully deboned with head and tail removed. The daily, time-consuming process was necessary. Whole fish reward would have created obese, unresponsive animals. The chunks with bones left in would have lacerated the animals' throats. Regular feeding consisted of whole fish,

swallowed un-chewed, head first. Their teeth are for self protection and fish catching only. The food must be very fresh as the animals will usually refuse it if slightly tainted or will become sick. Today squid is often used in place of chunks of fish. This greatly simplifies the trainer's work. Before quick freezing, a circus purchasing agent must have had his hands full getting good quality fish, approximately eight pounds per day per animal, in the Midwest in August.

Sea lions were quite exotic animals to much of the public during the days of the tent giants. They responded quickly, enthusiastically and often noisily, performing a wide variety of tricks. Their props were easy to handle, light weight and quick to place and dismantle. They gave every appearance of enjoying performing and physical punishment was not administered. They were paraded, and were menagerie and performing attractions of very little danger to the public. Being privately owned by the trainer, they were not an off season expense to most circus owners. Many trainers sought non-circus season bookings to cover the expense of feed.

Tracing the history of such acts as Huling, Tiebor, Winston and Woodward is complicated by multiple act ownership. Such owners might have as many as five acts on the road at any given time, not necessarily on the same circus.

The "Captain" presenting the act might be a relative or an apprentice. Most photographs show small groups of two to four animals. Feeding and care for more than this was a great deal of work and expense. Only the largest shows could afford more than one sea lion act. Obviously a special tank cage was necessary. Other necessities included an ice chest or freezer for the fish. The animals were carried from their tank cage wagon to the big top in a hand cart. This kept the animals clean in transit. Their patent leather black look is deceptive. A dry California sea lion varies in color from a dark blond to a "seal brown." The wet black animals would become muddy brown on most dirt lots. On a hot day a long trip, under their own power, might easily produce heat exhaustion.

The variety of tricks, of which sea lions are capable, is a revelation to all except trainers of dogs and primates. In addition to the previously



Ernie Firth and his sea lions on Sparks Circus in 1928. Pfening Archives.

named tricks, sea lions can be taught to play horns, drums, cymbals, nod yes and no, "speak," play volley ball and basketball, dance, muscle grind revolve, toss objects, shower, catch rings around the neck, throw fire torches, do a two seal lion "wheel barrow," operate a teeter board, etc., most of these being accomplished while balancing objects on their noses. Some have been taught to ride a pony, small horses and even small elephants.

A relatively complex series of tricks would consist of a sea lion climbing steps while balancing a stick with an indented top with a ball set in the indentation. Upon reaching the top step it would dislodge the stick with a rapid head shake, catching the ball on its nose. The falling stick would be caught in the mouth by a second animal on the ground. This animal would return to its pedestal, walking on its front flippers throwing the stick in the air and catching it in its mouth. A third animal, barking loudly, would be tossed the stick by the second animal, ostensibly to quiet it. This bit would usually elicit laughter from the audience. In the meantime, the original animal, still balancing the ball, would be crossing the tight rope at the top of the steps to a small pedestal, at the end doing a one flipper stand. On the return trip, the sea lion might carry a parasol on its nose, and upon reaching the ground would roll over while still balancing

the parasol on its way to its seat. The accomplishment of such a complex and interactive group of tricks by several animals, while directed by only one trainer, is a truly remarkable achievement in wild animal training.

For logistical reasons, water or tank acts were probably never presented on the American tented circus. Such acts are a staple in present day aquatic parks. Numerous European circus buildings have had submersible rings that could be flooded for water acts incorporating sea lions, diving, porpoise leaping, etc. The original Capt. Hugh Winston toured European theaters with high diving sea lions and diving girls with a portable tank. This act was presented at the New York Hippodrome, utilizing its well known tank.

A beautiful 1912 Barnum and Bailey Strobridge lithograph depicts the third type of sea lion act. This was trained and presented by the always-inventive Capt. Hugh Winston. This act, the popular sea lion riding act, was recreated by his son Harold in the 1940's on several circuses and for a few memorable weeks to this writer at the San Diego Zoo. Two custom-saddled ponies carried one animal each while the second pony also pulled a small cart also carrying a sea lion. Capt. Harold Winston ringmastered the ponies and cued and rewarded the three riding sea lions. They tossed various props back and forth and executed front flipper stands on the trotting ponies. A fourth sea lion worked as the "prop hand," fetching balls, caps, batons and flaming torches from a prop table while "Hamming it up" with applause and barking.

For several years, Paul Nelson presented a single riding sea lion in the 1940's on Cole Bros. Al G. Barnes' brother Capt. Stonehouse or Stonewall presented riding sea lions on both ponies and even a small elephant. One of the Hulings also presented a riding act on Ringling Bros. and Bamum & Bailey for a season or two.

A fourth kind of sea lion act was a variation of the standard circus act incorporating more comedy elements. The animal would be cued through many of the standard tricks while "talking" (barking), nodding yes or no, slapping and tripping the trainer etc. The fondly-remembered Walter Jennier specialized in this presentation for many years. He worked almost exclusively on truck shows, where the intimate nature of this act could be more easily appreciated in

the smaller big tops usually found on such shows. The fantastic act presented today by Roby Gasser is similar in appeal and design. He has wisely confined his polished presentation to Las Vegas, The Big Apple Circus, and television. The nuances of this marvelous act would be lost in a huge arena or a large tent. The Winston-type riding act would be a sensation and a distinct novelty in today's huge venues. Nothing in the circus is so old as not to be new again. The skit-like park presentations often cover a multitude of performing and training deficiencies. Walrus, otter and elephant seals are occasionally incorporated in the water park acts more for novelty than their actual performing capabilities. Benny Kirkbride presented a riding act at the San Diego Zoo for several years.

Historiography

Assigning the status of "first" to any aspect of the circus is a treacherous undertaking. The author is most receptive to any verifiable additions or corrections. The non-performing display of seals and seal lions preceded their performing status as was the case with most exotic animals. Buskars with monkeys and bears were the only probable exceptions. Stuart Thayer² quite logically suggests that the seal or sea lion "must have been exhibited as a single" the way elephants were originally. He alludes to finding "one in a pit show traveling with Franconi's Hippodrome in 1854 in an appearance at Janesville, Wisconsin." The author would assume this to be a North Atlantic Gray Seal, *Halichoerus grypus*, which should have been relatively easy to obtain, or possibly the common West Coast Harbor Seal, *Phoca vitulina*, the latter being the easiest to obtain and acclimate of the pinnepeds. Thayer also believes Barnum's circus in 1872, 1873, and 1874 is the earliest to advertise them. It is the author's calculated guess that these were true seals. Newspaper cuts, however, suggest otherwise.

Barnum's American Museum's 1858 catalogue³ has an illustration of what appears to be a true seal. Early advertising cuts depicting "Fur Hooded Eskimos" capturing seals is probably pure press agency. Thayer suggests Barnum leased these animals to Cooper in 1873, Cooper and Bailey in 1874 and W. W. Cole in 1873 and 1874. These Barnum-leased animals were probably the

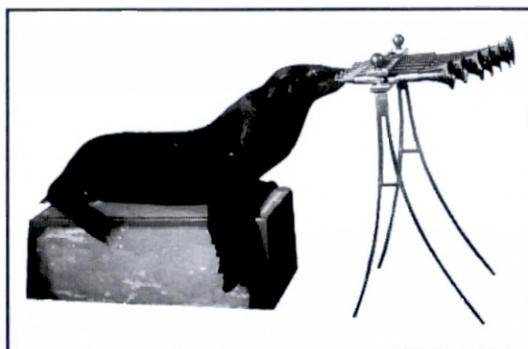
North Atlantic Gray Seal, not a sea lion. Both California sea lions and a Harbor seal were included in the remarkable collection of animals brought to the East Coast by the legendary "Grizzley" Adams in 1860.⁴ An early 1860's Barnum Museum guide book⁵ listed "Ned the learned seal" whose specialty was playing musical instruments, a trick of the type possible to the limited physical abilities of the true seal. He was probably the only animal survivor of the 1868 fire. More importantly he was possibly the first performing sea mammal in American show business. The trainer's identity isn't known to this writer.

This paper will not attempt to list every non-performing pinneped found in researching the subject; however, many were found. Montgomery Queen 1875, and Adam Forepaugh are among those believed to have actually displayed seals or sea lions as menagerie attractions. If the animals performed it is unlikely that this would not have been included in the advertising.

C. F. Adams claims "Woodward brought over from England a set of educated North Sea Seals in 1885."⁶ In the same article he claims to have had a partnership with Paul Boynton of Sea Lion Park fame in a sea lion act in 1900.

Loxton and Jamieson state that Joseph Woodward and his sons presented six seals and six sea lions in tossing hats, batons and lighted torches and most importantly "balancing footballs on their snouts."⁷ An 1898 Forepaugh-Sells poster of Capt. Woodward and his sons Joseph Jr. and William shows three distinct types of pinnepeds, true seals, Patagonian sea lions and what appear to be California sea lions. Interestingly, no animals are shown nose balancing anything.

Older circus fans will remember a seal playing *America* on his set of horns. Pfening Archives.



This might have been the act cited as appearing at Bunnell's Museum in 1887.⁸ Thayer suggests a relationship with Woodward's Gardens in San Francisco. A map of this early West Coast zoo shows separate pools for seals and sea lions, both of which are commonly found in the Bay area.⁹

Advertising material for the 1888 Bamum show refers to the kind of tricks usually presented by true seals not sea lions.¹⁰ Many of these simplistic tricks are shown in photographs in Carl Hagenbeck's book *Beasts and Man*. The Barnum show trainer is listed as a Herr Cassas, a Norwegian. The name and nationality are both suspect. The 1890 route book lists McGovern's or Magovem's performing seals.

The Woodward act was a feature on the 1894 and 1895 Sells Bros. Circus and the 1896 Forepaugh-Sells extravaganza. Newspaper cuts indicate the possible use of both seals and sea lions. An 1896 newspaper story describing this act refers to the animals as "ball players."¹¹ This is the earliest probable documentation of ball balancing known to the author. This would leave little doubt as to the act having sea lions. Accompanying art depicts tricks possible to the sea lion, not a true seal. The Hagenbeck show of 1895, a year earlier, had two true seals doing the appealing but limited accomplishments possible to their species.¹²

Professor H. V. MacWilliams is mentioned as having his "School of trained seals and sea lions" on Welsh Bros. in 1897. Could this have been the McGovern or Magovern on the Bamum Show of 1888? The Forepaugh-Sells 1898 route book contains a picture of a letterhead used by Joseph, William and "Professor" Woodward with the statement "Ten years in the principal cities of Europe and eight years in the U. S."

In 1902, Hugh Winston had his sea lion act on John Robinson. The following year his "flippered friends" performed on the Great Wallace Show. In 1905 he was back on John Robinson. By 1912 he was on the Bamum and Bailey Show. His well known pony-back riding sea lions were the subject of special Strobridge poster art. His well remembered son, Harold Winston, had the featured animal act on Yankee Patterson in 1941, Russell Bros. in 1943, Beatty-Russell Bros. in 1944 and the short lived C. R. Montgomery opus. In the late 1940's he briefly presented an

act at the San Diego Zoo. His was a featured presentation at Marineland of the Pacific near Los Angeles. Winston-trained sea lions appeared before the American public for the better part of sixty years.

Probably the best known name in the annals of American circus sea lion acts is that of "Captain" Roland Tiebor. Confusion exists as to which Tiebor actually worked the act. Other than Roland Tiebor Sr., Roland Jr., John, John Jr., Mary, and Maud Tiebor and Francis Hogan presented acts, all called Tiebor's seals and sea lions. The writer has seen many photographs of Tiebor's acts showing sea lions only, not one with a true seal. Charles Sparks had sea lion acts most years of his high class rail show. They were often Tiebor presentations. From 1929 on a Tiebor act, some seasons as many as four, were featured, more often than any other wild animal act, excepting the show-owned elephant acts, on the tent show version of the Greatest Show on Earth. The four acts were presented on the stages from 1929 through 1938. Tiebor sea lions in smaller presentations were on the big show most seasons through 1954. Many seasons two tank cages were needed to house these acts. Usually they were loaded later than most of the menagerie cages. These wagons were spotted in the back yard as they could become quite malodorous. The tanks might not have been dumped since early in the morning. As the animals often defecated in the water they could become "ripe." Nothing smells worse than a sea lion cage on a very hot late afternoon if draining and refilling the tank was impossible.

The feature of the Tiebor act for many years was the fondly-remembered horn playing gag. This show-stopper was undoubtedly the reason for Tiebor's exceptional longevity on the Big One. One animal would play *America* by exhaling through its nostrils into a set of very sensitive rack mounted horns. This would be slowly and carefully accomplished. As it bowed its head and saluted the audience at the conclusion of the simple tune, a second animal, barking energetically, would push the original horn player aside. The raucous and highly animated user would deliver a much louder and more up tempo rendition of the same tune. This "Spike Jones of the



The legendary Roland Tiebor in a 1941 publicity photo. Pfening Archives.

Animal Kingdom" would conclude his solo by delivering a highly animated round of self applause using its rear flippers. This was a major applause getter year in and year out. A variation on this great trick was presented on the Polack Western Unit where five seal lions were worked by Roland Sr. and Jr. and Francis Hogan. The featured animal was a young animal named Penny. She played the horns while beating a drum with a flipper-activated pedal, simultaneously beating cymbals with her rear flippers. She was a one sea lion band.

As was true with the Tiebors, there were several Hulings, Frank, Fred, Mark and John. Many little-known names appear as trainer for only a season or two on a variety of shows. Due to the time, expense and technique of framing these acts it is likely these were secondary acts owned by well-known trainers. In 1913 a Capt. Nelson presented sea lions on Hagenbeck-Wallace. A Capt. Wesley had the act on Sparks in 1913. Capt. Kent had the "Pacific Water Dogs" on Hagenbeck-Wallace in 1914, to be replaced by Capt. Bennett in 1915 and Professor Treat in 1916. Capt. Strassle had the "fish eaters" on John Robinson in 1921 and 1922.

Other trainer-presenters had longer tenures in the business without achieving any long-lasting impact on circus history. Capt. Belovockey, also known as "Little Joe" Belovsky, was on Barnes in 1937 and Cole Bros. in 1941. Earnest Firth was on Sparks in 1928 and Cole Bros. in 1935 and 1936.

Capt. Pichard had sea lions on

LaTena in 1915, Downie in 1937 and 1938 and Wallace Bros. in 1941 and 1942. Al G. Barnes' brother, Capt. Stonehouse or Stonewall, had the sea lion acts on that famed wild animal circus for many seasons. Capt. Charles C. Charles (Jensen) had the seals on the Barnes show from 1922 through 1927. This fine old German, from the Hagenbeck school, finished up his animal training with the first sea lion act at the San Diego Zoo, beginning a fifty year tradition of sea lion acts at the venue. Capt. Leslie Borinstein and Joe Belovockey had the last sea lion acts on the Barnes show. Capt. Borinstein also went to San Diego where his step-son Benny Kirkbride succeeded him for the next 35 years.

Walter Jennier came from a family of acrobats. He may have introduced the handstand on a seal lion's nose as currently presented by Roby Gasser. Jennier worked a "talking" or vaudeville style comedy act with a series of animals always named Buddy. His was the featured act on many truck shows including Russell Bros. in 1936-1938 and 1943, Haag Bros. for part of 1938, Wallace Bros., and Hunt Bros. in 1961. His well-crafted and highly polished act worked steadily for many years. His aerialist wife Ethel had an end ring act on Ringling in 1964. Joann, their aerialist daughter, also presented an act similar to the Buddy act in the 1970's.

Roland Hebler (could this have been a Tiebor act?) had sea lion acts of Cole Bros. in 1936, 1938 and 1940. Cat man Bert Nelson tried sea lions on the short-lived Great American Circus of 1939. Spencer Huntley, usually an elephant man, presented the sea lion act on Cole Bros. in 1945.

In 1927 and 1928 the Hulings had five separate acts on The Big One, followed by the Tiebors' long tenure. To get a sense of the popularity of sea lion acts consider that they appeared on Ringling-Barnum on 31 of 37 tented tours. During this same period big cat acts were presented only twenty two of those years. Uncaged bear acts were listed for only fifteen and caged bears only thirteen seasons. Surprisingly, chimpanzee acts were relatively rare, being part of the line up for only seven seasons. After the the Hulings and Tiebor eras on Ringling, a succession of one or two

season tours by European acts graced Big Bertha. Armand Guerre and his flipper friends frolicked in 1953. Van Donwen had "skating penguins" with his sea lion presentation in 1967 and 1968. Ringling-Barnum had a two act presentation in 1989 presented by Harrison and Steibner. Pederson was on one of the units in 1989. After a 1996 tour on the Dubsky show, the excellent, though abbreviated, presentation of Emil Popescu's Patagonian, snub-nosed sea lions was given a deserved center ring solo spot on Ringling-Barnum. At this writing, Diane Wilson's act, usually presented by her grandson D. V. Allen, is the only other act of sea lions touring in the United States.

A few years back a disastrous truck accident foiled well-known dog and baboon trainer Lee Stevens' efforts with a group of sea lions. Roby Gasser has graced the Big Apple Circus in recent years. In this aficionado's opinion, his act of both California and Patagonian animals is one of the finest wild animal acts of the past fifty years. Superb timing and original tricks with innovative comedic elements distinguish this remarkable act.

As one studies the line ups of various circuses over the past hundred years it is apparent certain high-line producers were more receptive to hiring the expensive sea lion acts. The Ringlings, Charles Sparks and Zack Terrell were consistent employers of these acts.

Beginning with the opening season of the Adkins-Terrell Cole Bros. in 1935 through the next seventeen years they were a part of the program. For the inaugural season of 1935 Earnest Firth's center ring act was flanked by presentations by Albert Fleet and Grover McCabe. The next season Fleet took over the display with Paul Nelson and Albert Mann working the side ring presentations. Hebler and Fleet had the two acts in 1937. Hebler and Capt. Bernardy worked the two acts carried in the disastrous 1938 tour. On the retrenched show of 1939, Fleet presented a single act. Hebler worked the act for the next season. The enlarged 1941 show had two acts presented by Joe Belovockey and a Harry Roland. Was this a Roland Tiebor act? For 1942 Belovockey and a Capt. Danlo shared the honors as did Jean

Allen and Marion Knowlton in 1943. Their acts were trained by Melvin Plunket, who toured with the acts, supervising and caring for the animals. The following season these fondly-remembered show girls presented Plunket's trained animals in two rings. His solo pony-riding sea lion Harry was in the center ring presented by Paul Nelson. Spencer Huntley supervised the three acts in 1945 with Knowlton and Helen Scott flanking the riding animal, again presented by Paul Nelson. Earl Page supervised the three acts in 1946. Harry the rider was the only sea lion presented on the show in 1947, still worked by Paul Nelson.

Mark Huling and Walter Jennier maintained a "seal college" at Kingston, New York in the 1930's. The Tiebors also had a training facility in New York State for many years. Capt. Harold Winston trained animals at the Thousand Oaks California compound and later at Marineland of the Pacific. Capt. Charles Jensen, Capt. Leslie Borenstein and Benny Kirkbride maintained a tradition of over fifty years of fine sea lion training at the San Diego Zoo. Such training facilities are now sadly gone. Except for the "park" shows, the nearly one hundred year tradition of the sea lion act is nearly lost in the United States. We can only hope circus producers will offer bookings, salaries and accommodations to some of the fine European acts so that they might establish home bases here. As we lose bear and chimp acts, are we to suffice with the generic elephant and tiger act ad nauseam?

With sea lion acts, cage cleaning,

Walter Jennier and one of his "Bud-dies" on Russell Bros. Circus in 1943. Pfening Archives.



fresh drinking water, careful food preparation and fish freshness, mothering was usually the province of the act's owner-trainer or presenter. Cage boys or grooms were unknown. The "salting" of the tank water was necessary to prevent blindness and skin problems. Pneumonia-causing drafts and spoiled fish was a constant possibility. Deboning was a boring and time consuming task before the availability of frozen squid which require only thawing. A sea lion trainer always carried the heady aroma and scars of his art.

My most sincere thanks to Fred Dahlinger and the late Bob Parkinson and their staffs at the Parkinson Library at the Circus World Museum. John Polascek, Stuart Thayer and Richard Reynolds were invaluable in their contributions and highly supportive attitudes. Conversations with the Jenniers, Tiebors, Harold Winston, "Capt. Charles" Jensen and Max Morris planted the seeds for this article as long as fifty years ago.

Notes

1. All scientific species designation, sizes and geographic distribution are from *Mammals of the World* Vol. II by Earnest P. Walker et. al., Johns Hopkins Press, Baltimore, Maryland, pp. 1283-1316.
2. Personal communication with author.
3. *Illustrated Catalogue and Guide Book of Barnum's Museum*, 1858.
4. *Cooke's Royal Circus With the Grizzly Adams Bear Menagerie* by Robert Kitchen, *Bandwagon*, January-February 1989.
5. *P. T. Barnum. America's Greatest Showman* by Philip B. Kunhardt et. al. 1995 Alfred A. Knopf, New York, p. 140
6. *New York Clipper* February 14, 1914 in an article by C. F. Adams, p. 35.
7. *The Golden Age of the Circus* by Howard Loxton; Regency House Publishing 1997, London, England, pp. 94 and 95.
8. *New York Clipper*, October 1, 1887.
9. *Woodward's Gardens Guide Book* in the collection of Richard J. Reynolds III.
10. *New York Mail and Express*, March 14, 1888.
11. *Cleveland, Ohio World*, May 3, 1896.
12. *Chicago Inter-Ocean*, March 11, 1895.

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Illustration: Bill Mayer Design: Nappi/Eliana/Murphy

This paper was presented at the 1997 Circus Historical Society Convention in Northbrook, Illinois.

High seating. The place where short people can sit at the circus so they can see! I don't think so.

Something every owner hopes to do at every performance, perhaps? Inside the big top those that don't move when you ask them to . . . the announcer gently reminds over the P. A. system that the

higher you go in the seating, the better you will see! Sometimes this works on the public, but not always.

A call to arms begins on the midway when you notice that it is jammed forty-five minutes before the advertised show time or in circus language, simply D-o-o-o-r-s. You expect a straw house and you prepare to put as many people in the seats as physically possible.

Once the seating starts to become fairly full, the job of filling in the vacant spaces becomes much harder. I learned with my own circus to actually close some sections of seating . . . like the whole back side and the round end closest to the marquee. I closed them off with sucker netting. People coming into the tent were greeted by circus workers, management, and conscripted performers who told them to sit in allotted front sections and to go all the way to the top of each seat section.

Eventually you had to open up the other sections but you could do it gradually and after you had filled the front side to capacity. The front section or long side gave you the longest continuous sections of seating as opposed to the back side or short side that was broken by the back door and band stand and the round ends which curve and hold limited numbers.

People were usually shy out in public . . . at least they were then. They would not excuse themselves or ask someone to move over so they could step on a seat board to get to vacant spaces two or even six boards higher up.

That's where we came in. Hey--MOVE YOUR FANNY LADY. LET THESE GOOD FOLKS UP THERE. THEY PAID THE SAME PRICE AS YOU. You had to be pretty forceful to get people to move their behinds. I got pretty good at spotting vacant areas of blue seat boards and could judge quickly if I could jam 2-3-4 or more people into that space. The

High and Dry on the Inside: **THE GENTLE ART OF HIGH SEATING**

By A. W. Stencell

spaces higher up in the seating were the easiest to fill--once you got them up there. They were stuck there and everybody had to move and let them in.

When seat space got real short we separated families and couples to fill in individual holes in the seating. Some folks who came without kids got one or two. Guys and girls that came without dates--left with one.

People got wise to you. I would walk by sections escorting folks to seats but my eyes were scanning the sections we were passing for flashes of blue board peering out like dandelions in a well kept lawn. One look by me into a section of seats and it looked like the people were literally making themselves bigger to hide any vacant space beside them. Some even shouted: NO MORE ROOM. That made me even more determined to squeeze a few more people into that section--usually right up there

Stencell's first circus was called Royal Bros. Author's collection.



beside the shouter. A gentle reminder by the show announcer that every-board was a seat . . . there were no foot boards usually brought a GROAN from the crowd. All are seats were comfortable they were made from soft pine.

We continued to jam people into the seats. Once every nook and cranny in the seating was full, then as a last resort

you seated on the ground in front of the seat sections. In a small top, anything below a 90 foot round, this meant using up the space on the track--so spec was cancelled. With a single bull you didn't have to worry about the long mount. But, like any good circus owner you found lots to worry about.

Straw houses always sound good, and look good in the trade papers. But in truth they are dangerous to your public liability and your blood pressure. The day you have them sitting on the ground around the end rings is the day the third horse in the liberty act decides he has had enough of this going around and around in a small circle and wants to gallop around the whole track, or one of the dancing bears decides to eat kids instead of day old bread, or as happened to me, a drunk decides to drive his car up the midway, through the marquee, and into the top.

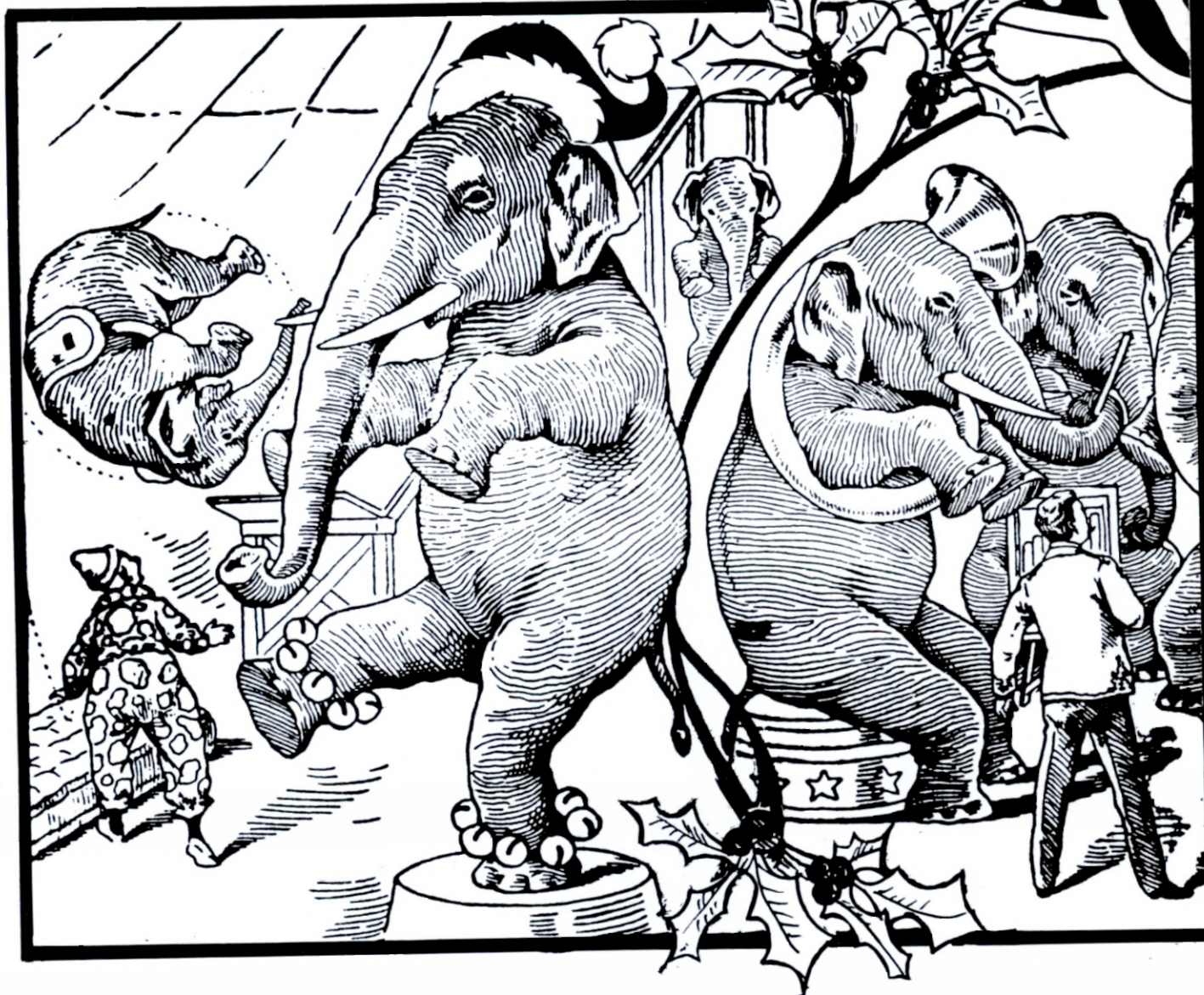
Loss of concession revenue. These people seated on the ground become an obstacle course for the seat butchers. The seats are packed full so they cannot climb into them to get to their customers. People won't leave their seats in case I come around and put to more people in their vacant seat. And you thought the 7th inning stretch at the ball park was for your convenience.

Lucky for me, I had one of the best seat setters in the business, a guy who joined our show as a teenager and spent 16 seasons with me indoors and outdoors. Eddy could set seats. On the ram'em and jam'em days it was Eddy's job to patrol the seats and keep an eye out for weak jacks or stringers. In many cases we would double jack the last big jack. If the ground was any way soft or could get that way, we put small squares of 3/4 inch plywood under the leg of each jack in the entire seating. We never had the seats fall on us.

Sometimes we would have them so tightly packed into the seats that we would cancel intermission knowing

*To all our Circus Friends:
May your trunks be packed
with Holiday Blessings*

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STREET



& BARNES RING & CUS

*The Carson & Barnes
Circus Family*

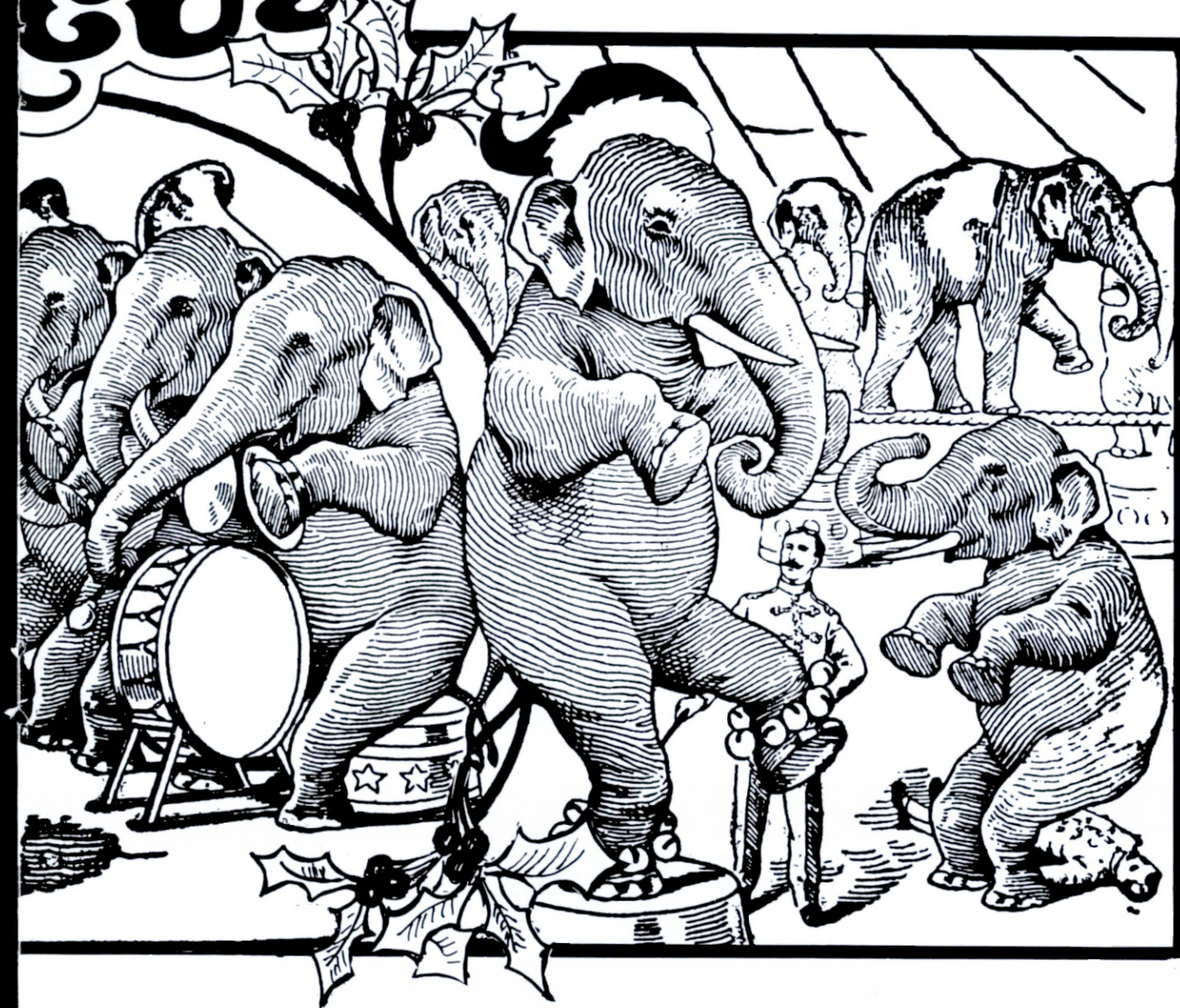
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Co-Owners*

*Geary & Barbara Byrd
Co-Owners*

Kristin Byrd

Traci and Julio Cavallini

*Doyle & Donna Milson
Executive Agents*





Royal Bros. Circus in Oxbow, Saskatchewan in 1976. The big top was a 100 round top with two 30s. There were three elephants on the show. Author's collection.

that if we let them down off the seats it would take us too long to re-tie the loosened seat ropes and reset the fallen small jacks and get them back into the seats to start the second half of the show. So without an intermission you lose more money.

Worst of all was the combination of a big crowd, rain, and a leaky tent. One thing I learned and practiced on Martin and Downs was to have a big marquee. I had a 30 x 30 with three centre poles. I also had a very strong set of marquee gates. The next guy wasn't going to drive through the marquee. The wide marquee gave you a nice wide midway, the big marquee made the show look big. On wet days we moved the gates back to the second marquee center pole. Every show manager knows the front gate huggers do all the bitching and complaining. The side show manager could tell them to let go of the marquee railings because the main big top electrical feed just shorted out and was lying next to one of the gates and they would still hang onto the gates. No smooth tongue talker or 60 volts of electricity is going to get me to spend fifty cents. So you don't want these folks to get wet and even madder while you hold the crowd on the midway so the side show can get a good shot at them. Mobs are set off by only a few agitators.

On rainy days when the gates are opened the public comes in from the midway with wet clothes and muddy boots. Soon the seats are wet and muddy. People start looking for clean seat boards and leave dirty areas in the seating empty. We tried to solve this problem by keeping a lot of old towels and rags stored away along with bundles of old heralds and newspapers. I had the working men wipe the wet and dirty

seats and we would hand people a herald or pages of news print to put under them.

On days when we had over-capacity business, you headed into the back yard to conscript performers to help you high seat. They suddenly had urgent things to do. Props that had remained unpolished all season were now getting first class attention.

I'd have a core of people who could high seat and were good at it. Billy Martin was a great high seater. He totally charmed fifteen inch bottoms onto seven inches of pine. The late Bill McCory was also a great high seater.

When I worked on Sells and Gray as a butcher we tried to solve the problem of getting into the seats on those crowded days. About eight of us went out and bought golf shoes with the little spikes on them. A gentle nudge with them and the seated patron quickly made room for you! This went on for a few days until the office got tired of the beefs and we were told: NO MORE GOLF SHOES.

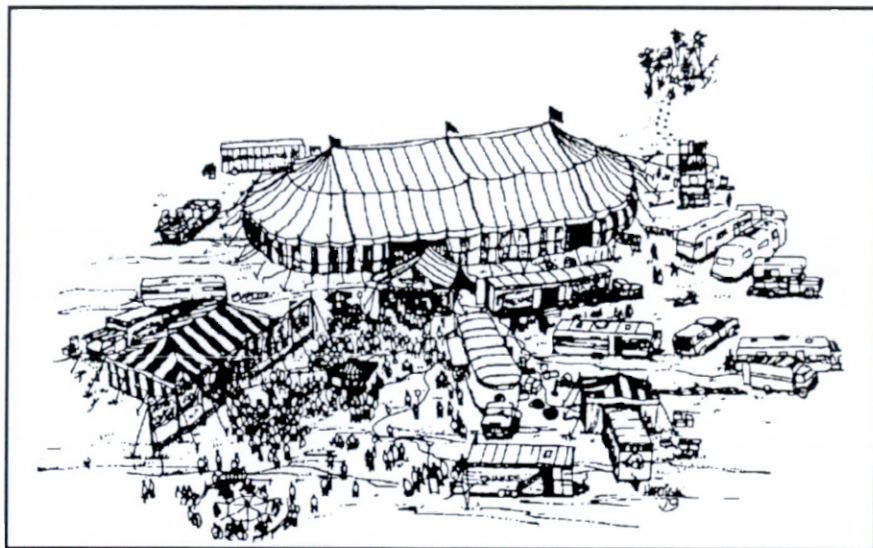
Along the route sponsors, fire marshals, and building inspectors always wanted to know your exact seating capacity. We could usually ac-

commodate about 1,000 but we often had over 1,500. Usually you could seat more at the first evening showing as it was two thirds kids.

Our seating capacity was limited to the size of our crowds bottoms. Only once did I regret putting people on our seats. It was an opening day and unfortunately not all the freshly painted seat boards were thoroughly dry. Downtown you could easily identify all those who went to the circus--at least from the back. They all had a seven inch blue stripe across their backsides. The cleaning bills took the lustre off a very big opening day.

The first time I had seen high seating in a building was in 1971 on a trip through Europe. My wife Shirley and I arrived in Munich and I wanted to see a performance of Circus Krone in its winter arena. We walked up to the arena from the railway station and were told that it was completely sold out for that night. It was Charlie Revels last public appearance in the ring, so I was determined to see the show. The Sembachs, who owned the show, lived next door in a big house. I went around to their back door and knocked. Mr. Sembach answered and I told him that I was from Canada and in the circus business. He said to come back that night and he would meet us in the lobby. We returned and he was good to his word. He put us in seats about four rows back of the ring seats. It soon became obvious as show time drew nearer that there were more people than seats. Soon fancy attired prop men appeared in each stairway to the vari-

Drawing of Stencell's Martin & Downs Circus on a lot in 1979. Author's collection.





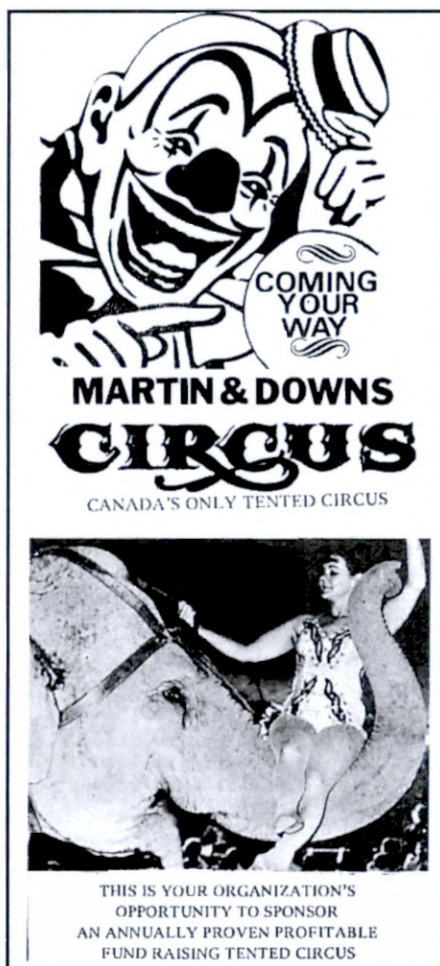
ous seat sections. The prop guy in front of us signalled for everyone in our section to move over to the left and we all shuffled our bottoms along. New people filled the spaces we had just left. Again we were told to move to the left and we all did. More people were seated. Just like adding more eggs to an omelette.

The highest act of high seating that I ever witnessed was on my Super Circus International Indoor Circus. When I built this circus in the winter of 1983, I did so with the idea of playing the east coast. Normally, Garden Bros. would play the big towns in eastern Canada and I would play the smaller ones with my tent circus. However, Garden Bros., two seasons previously, had gotten into a jam down east because Cuneo's animal acts had left the show and the circus was short of four legged attractions. I felt it was now fresh enough again. I approached the Newfoundland Arena Association about playing all the arenas and they were very receptive. I met with Herb Dewling, the old manager of the St. John's Stadium, and he lined up all the east coast managers. On the other end of the island we met all the west coast managers in Corner Brook. I had laid out a route which included all the buildings on the island with the exception of two or three. One of the ones I left out was St. Anthony. St. Anthony was the farthest point you could go on the north-west arm of Newfoundland, just below Labrador. To get there you had to drive 280 miles, the first seventy miles or so on a twisting narrow road through Gros Morne National Park and Long Range Mountains. Gros Morne Park was noted for its Norwegian-like fiords. Once you got through there you had a pretty flat but foggy drive along the coast into St. Anthony. No

The midway of the Martin & Downs Circus in 1983. Author's collection

circus had been up there. I didn't plan to be either. The arena manager from there was persistent that I play his building and by the end of our meeting had convinced the other managers to stick with him--it was all or none. So, I booked St. Anthony.

The front cover of a two color book-ing folder used by Stencell's circus.



The manager took me aside after the meeting and said his building was called the Olympia and it was one of the best buildings on the island. The only Olympia that I knew was the Detroit Olympia.

So in mid-June when we rolled out of the fog after a sleepless night of all-night driving and moose dodging, there in front of us was the famous Olympia. It was a high building covered in silver painted rippled sheet steel, the material you covered barns with. On several places on the sides and roof these metal pieces were completely missing. On the side was one little door and near the back one set of double doors. Inside we found seats for about 750. The arena manager greeted me with the news that he had sold almost 4,000 advance tickets. There was obviously going to be no rest for the wicked.

This was also the only arena that I was ever in where a stream ran through the men's washroom. The men's urinal was a stone opening like a big fireplace and we guessed the stream in there went out to sea.

We opened the doors an hour before the 4:30 show time and the place was soon jammed. We took up the end rings and left the ring carpets down on the cold concrete and these areas were soon full. Meantime, the manager was still selling tickets to a long line of people. The audience was standing, sitting, and hanging everywhere. I finally had to step in and tell him to shut down the box office as it was getting too dangerous to have any more people on the floor. I had Mike Clark's lions, Jackie Althoff's bears and chimps, and Bill Morris' elephants. All these folks could be complete ranks at the best of times and I knew Mike Clark would probably pass out in the steel arena if he saw all these Newfies shaking hands with his lions as they went from their cages into the ring. The manager closed the ticket window and went into the arena with me, looked around that this sea of people and said: "my son, my son, tis still room for a dozen or more." He went back and opened up the ticket window and sold another dozen or so tickets. He told these people to follow him. They followed him through the crowd down to the end of the building where the hockey score board and clock were. The manager hauled out a 30 foot wooden ladder and leaned it almost straight up onto a small walkway below the clock. Customers scrambled up the ladder and perched about 25 feet above the floor.



The midway of the Martin & Downs Circus in 1983. Author's collection.

Then he took the ladder away. I didn't bother mentioning getting them down for intermission.

Of course my agreement with the arenas in Newfoundland was a first money contract for me and then a 75/25 percent split. I know if I had been on a flat rental the manager would have stopped me from selling that many tickets, although we occasionally had rental buildings where the manager let you take your best shot and more people usually meant more money for his canteen. In Summerside, Prince Edward Island the box office line was three to four people wide and it went twice around the building. The fire marshal came out and tried to stop the show and the arena manager locked him in one of the hockey dressing rooms until after the show. Then he told the fire marshal I did it. I blamed it on my assistant manager who by that time was already on the ferry going to the mainland.

One nice thing about the circus business is that it is rarely dull—even the indoor side of it. Most problems come out of the blue. Some make you laugh until you cry and some just make you cry. Many problems you cause yourself. When it is a choice between bankruptcy or heat—you usually prefer the roasting. Burns heal but bankruptcy takes at least seven years to get your credit back again.

The first season that Day Glo Necklaces came out such a situation occurred. We were selling grosses of them every day along the route. Our first two day stand was Saint John, New Brunswick in the old Lord Beaverbrook Arena. This date was a real pain to play in the first place. To hang the aerial rigging you had to crawl up the outside of the building and come in through the roof. The manager was an old salt named Ron Ferris who actually liked circuses. His arena staff was an assort-

ment of the most dysfunctional people still legally employable in the city. Business could range from turn always to moderate without any good explanation.

This time we had very good Friday afternoon and night business. All things looked very promising for a big three-show Saturday. I stayed in the hotel next to the arena and I was there two hours before doors for the 10:30 morning show. Already we had two dozen or more people waiting outside the main doors. I had to pass these people to get to the employees' door. The first person in line asked me if I knew where the manager was. Here, I blew the first rule of playing the IGGY. Instead of saying to him that I didn't know but what do you want and I will pass it on . . . I said proudly, I am.

Out came the Day Glo Necklaces from all the people standing there but they were no longer glowing. They wanted their money back. I had never even thought about the life span of these things, but I quickly recovered. I told them not to worry. Obviously the sellers had forgotten to tell them how to recharge them. Simply

go home, put the necklaces in the freezer compartment of your frig and leave them there for at least 24 hours.

That gave me enough time to be out of town. They all thanked me and left. Throughout the day, others came back with their necklaces and all were told the freezer story. When we played Halifax the following week on another two day stand I made sure that the concession manager did not sell the necklaces until the second day of the run.

High seating—an art form? You be the judge.

ANNOUNCING SPECTACLE

A QUARTERLY JOURNAL OF THE CIRCUS ARTS

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Holiday Greetings
and Best Wishes

Joe and Marion McKennon

The year of 1866 marked the beginning of an association between James M. Nixon and Dan Castello that would continue for the next three years and carry the showmen from the East coast to the Pacific Ocean. Castello had launched his first solely-owned wagon circus in 1864 when he moved into the South behind the lines of the Union army. A circus was taken out with Seth B. Howes the following year intermixing the use of the Castello title with that of Howes until the partnership was dissolved on January 6, 1866, in Memphis.¹

Around this time James M. Nixon went to Little Rock, Arkansas, where all or part of Seth B. Howes' Great European Circus was stored. This was the show that had all the grand parade wagons imported by Howes in 1864. The Flatfoots (Bailey, June, Smith, and Nathans) bought part of the outfit and Nixon, Castello, and Egbert Howes put out a show under the Dan Castello name with the remainder. Castello was the manager and drawing card; Howes, the treasurer; and Nixon, the contracting agent. The Castello-Nixon-Howes combination opened in Memphis on January 22. Charles Bernard's partial routing for the season has the company in St. Louis on April 23, then Washington, Jefferson City, Tipton, Sedalia, Warrensburg, Pleasant Hill and Independence, all in Missouri, all in April. Exhibitions were given in Kansas City on May 1 and 2, and by the middle of August the show was in Canada.²

Now, Nixon, in his mid-forties, was married for the second time. The bride was Buffalo born Emma Maddern, who was not yet twenty years of age. We are told by T. Allston Brown that the wedding occurred somewhere in Canada. The bride's father was "a gentleman well known in the musical profession" who had come to the United States in 1842. The new Mrs. Nixon was an actress, having made her debut at De Bar's Theatre in St. Louis, where she had performed for three years. Later, she became known to theatre patrons in the Western cities as one of the Maddern Sisters.³

Castello's Great Show opened at Mobile, Alabama, March 11, 1867. It played other Alabama

The Adventures of JAMES M. NIXON Forgotten Impresario

PART THREE

By William L. Stout

dates and then moved into Tennessee before proceeding north to Louisville, where it met up with the Barnum and Van Amburgh parties (owned by Hyatt Frost, Henry Barnum, James E. Kelley and O. J. Ferguson) and combined with them into one large company under the banner

Newspaper ad used by Nixon's New York Circus, Howes' United States Circus and Dan Castello's Trained Animals in 1868. Pfening Archives.

THE MONSTER SHOW OF DAN CASTELLO,

COMING!!

Comprising

Nixon's New York Circus, Howes' United States Circus, and Dan Castello's Trained Animals.

WE WILL EXHIBIT AT BETHANY, T. ROAD, SEPTEMBER 16TH,
AFTER DUSK AND NIGHT.

ADMISSION, 50 CENTS.
Children under 12 years of age, 25 "

MANAGER, - - - MR. E. C. HOWE.



Never before in the history of amusements in America, has any enterprise of similar character been inaugurated on so vast and grand a scale as the present company — Now has there ever before been offered for public appreciation and patronage, an exhibition which combines such numerous and varied attractions. Before speaking of these in detail, the management desires to direct public attention to a feature as novel in conception and in grand execution; we refer to our great GRATUITOUS EXHIBITION, which characterizes the entire of our establishment in every place.

A BRILLIANT STREET PAGEANT, which for excitement, richness, elegance, dazzling effect, gorgeous display and thrilling interest, has never been equaled since the triumphant proceedings of Ancient Rome. In this grand cavalcade and moving picture will appear the Hand Carried, of original design and resplendent decoration, called the

THRONE OF APOLLO!

of Barnum, Van Amburgh & Castello's Great Show and Mammoth Moral Exhibition. This was not the whole Van Amburgh outfit, but surplus animals from it which had started from Connersville, Indiana, around April 15. P. T. Barnum was its president; Hyatt Frost, director; Henry Barnum, manager; and Joel E. Warner, advertiser. The animal department consisted of Tippo Saib, the largest elephant in the

country at this time; also, a fifteen foot giraffe, the only one of its kind on the continent; and a double-humped Bactrian camel, royal Bengal tigers, a white Himalayan Mountain bear, a silver-striped hyena, lions, leopards, wolves, sacred cattle, panthers, an ibex, performing mules and monkeys, South American deer, a tapir, baboons, pelicans, silver pheasants, and much more. The museum displayed some of the choicest and most popular curiosities in the Barnum collection.⁴ But this seemingly formidable combination was short-lived, as much of the property was withdrawn part way into the season.

After making towns in Kentucky, followed by an incursion into Virginia, West Virginia, South Carolina, Mississippi, and back to Virginia, Castello & Co. closed in Washington, D. C., on February 22, 1868. They then settled into Frederick City, Maryland, for a respite before starting from there in the spring. In February the local *Examiner* announced that the show had arrived and "the animals, embracing a great variety, are now safely quartered at the barracks." But following the destructive fire at Barnum's Museum on March 3, which incinerated all but a few of the Van Amburgh animals quartered there, the remainder of the collection was retrieved from the Castello show and returned to New York to form the nucleus of Van Amburgh's Great Golden Menagerie. On April 15 the *Examiner* reported that the town was lively with country people, in for a circus holiday, the show having opened their touring season on the 13th. The street parade was judged to be a thing of beauty but "the inside performance was very poor."⁵ The troupe started out under the Castello title, but by

the time it arrived in Chicago for a June 15-20 stand the advertisements read "Nixon's New York Circus, Howes' United States Circus & Dan Castello's Great Show." Traveling in rented railway cars, the routing took them through Maryland, West Virginia, Ohio, Michigan, Illinois, Wisconsin, and as far west as Kansas. Understandably, all the dates were not made on rail. When towns were off the established lines, equipment was moved by wagons, probably commissioned from local farmers. The fall weather sent the show southward and at season's end it came to rest for the winter in New Orleans.

As early as February of 1867 the newspapers were recounting the progress of the transcontinental railroad project: "540 miles of the Union Pacific Railroad running west from Utah across the continent are now completed, the tracks being laid and trains running 10 miles of the summit of the Rocky Mountains."⁶ Nixon, Castello and Howes recognized the profitability of following the steel ribbons westward and kept a watchful eye out for news of the construction as it neared completion. The new railroad was affecting a financial hustle and bustle in cities along the line as building and commercial expansion created jobs and prosperity. Mining towns off the rail route, where men had money in their pockets and little to spend it on, was virgin territory for traveling shows. The first circus through would reap a wild harvest. And then the moment arrived. The golden spike driven at Promontory, Utah, on May 10, 1869 was the signal the Castello outfit had been waiting for and, as the story has it, Nixon was on the first train out of Omaha for California. On arriving at Promontory, he detrained and wired back for the show to come on.⁷

The stage was now set for the memorable trek to the West Coast. After opening the 1869 season in New Orleans on January 4 with essentially the same company as in 1868, and a swing through Mississippi, Alabama, and Georgia, Dan Castello's Great Show, Circus, Menagerie and Abyssinian Caravan reached Topeka for a stand on Thursday, May 13, being the first flat car show ever to play there. The show then swiftly moved northward, arriving at Omaha for May 26-27, just sixteen days after the meeting of the two great railroads at Promontory Point.



Dan Castello, Nixon's partner for a number of years. Pfening Archives.

Wasting no time, the outfit was loaded onto an eight-car special the night of the 27th and started on the journey to Grand Island, North Platte, and finally Cheyenne, Wyoming, for May 31-June 1. Here the Castello troupe left the railroad for an overland trip to Denver and other Colorado locations. Along the way they encountered bad weather and muddy roads which delayed by a day the first circus company to ever play Denver. The show returned to Cheyenne on June 18 and began a trek west through Wyoming, Nevada and, at last, California, and the honor of being the first circus to play coast-to-coast.

Some have called this the high point of Nixon's career. Certainly, as co-owner and agent, his share of the accomplishment was immense. His skillful hand at routing the organization is apparent. But the contributions of Nixon and Howes are obscured by the prominence of the Castello name in the show title and Castello's frequent interviews with the press in connection with the incident. Now, for whatever reason, the fortunes of James M. Nixon begin a decline, and with it came a paucity of information in following his movements.

In the fall of 1870 Nixon's New York Circus was organized to commence a southern tour.⁸ The South was over-crowded with circuses at this time, with no less than nine shows roaming about. Stone & Mur-

ray; Cooper, Hemmings & Whitby; J. W. Robinson's; and Stowe's were the four shows in Mississippi; both G. G. Grady and DeHaven were in Alabama; Charles Noyes' Circus and Van Amburgh's Menagerie in Tennessee; and C. T. Ames' was in the southwestern part of Georgia before he was eliminated by a bullet in Dawson, Georgia on November 2.

With the current war being waged on the European continent, the demand for cotton was down, the economy sluggish, and consequently the circus business was slow. But Nixon's New York Circus had a head start on the others. Scheduled to open in Savannah, Georgia, October 3 and 4, the company arrived there too late on the 3rd to give a performance but had good houses in the afternoon and evening of the following day. After making Atlanta on the 7th and 8th, the show then moved into Alabama and Mississippi until the end of November.

Head start or not, it would appear the Nixon party was experiencing hard times. In the *Clipper* of December 3 it was reported the circus had collapsed and some members of the company were going up the Red River to give performances. Three issues later an item had the show exhibiting in Shreveport, on December 4 and 5, before leaving for Texas on the 7th. Then, a letter from a Galveston, Texas, correspondent, dated January 6, 1871, revealed that "Nixon's company is here exploded, and the boys without a cent." The salaries were not paid, the circus property was attached, and Nixon was off to New Orleans. Had the "slicker" lost his gloss?

In December of 1871 Nixon resurfaced in New York City, where he opened what he called "Nixon's Amphitheatre" in a building on the east side of Broadway, opposite Waverly Place. Since its erection in 1838 the structure had undergone a variety of transfigurations and titular identities. Originally, as The Church of the Messiah, the gray stone edifice housed the pulpit for Orville Dewey, a Unitarian minister who had been keeping his hours of reverence at the Stuyvesant Institute. The Rev. Samuel Osgood became the pastor there in 1854 and the building continued in the service of the Lord until the good minister removed to Park Avenue and Thirty-fifth street ten years later. A. T. Stewart then purchased the facility and desanctified it with the title of Athenaeum. There fol-

lowed a rather rapid exchange of proprietorships and designations--Broadway Amphitheatre, Lucy Rushton's Theatre, New York Theatre, Worrell Sister's New York Theatre, Globe Theatre--and now, for a brief period of arenic entertainment, Nixon's Amphitheatre.⁹

Nixon placed a ring upon the stage, perhaps on the very spot where Orville Dewey had held forth, and opened his small circus on December 18. His rather distinguished company of performers included James, Frank, George, and Alex Melville; Henry Welby Cooke, George Adams, Carlotta DeBerg, Nat Austin, W. Herbert Williams, William Worrell, François Siegrist and, for her New York debut, trapezist Leona Dare. Frank Whittaker was ringmaster and Nixon returned to his former occupation of equestrian director. The arenic activity waned to a standstill by the first week in January, 1872; after which, *Cinderella* was pulled out of storage for a brief appearance.

Nixon turned to Chicago for his next venture. He leased a lot in the unburned west side of the city, on Clinton Street, between Washington and Randolph, for the construction of a pleasure dome. Work began under the supervision of Wallace Hume around the middle of April and, through the industry of the building trade, "Nixon's Parisian Hippodrome and Chicago Amphitheatre" was completed for opening Saturday, May 18, 1872. The front of the edifice presented an attractive appearance with gas jets extending the entire length and an elegant arch over the entrance. A sign full across the front read NIXON'S AMPHITHEATRE! The interior was arranged with chairs in tiers from the ring to the canvas top and a commodious promenade was adorned by panels elaborately illustrated with scenes from the sports and pastimes of former years, rendered by the well-known Chicago artist R. W. Wallis. The place was lighted with gas, thoroughly ventilated, and could comfortably accommodate 2,500 people.

The industrious proprietor had grand plans for his new establishment. He envisioned the staging of equestrian, acrobatic, and gymnastic exercises, as well as elaborate productions of dramatic spectacles.

The stock company was comprised of some forty performers who, the ads read, "occupied the highest niche in Hippodramatic Art and Equestri-ricalastiques." Oh, James! Spencer Q. Stokes was the ringmaster; Prof. Colston led the orchestra. One of the main attractions was the Yeddo Japanese Troupe. This versatile group performed feats of sword juggling, ball tossing, aerial drumming, sword ladder ascensions, and slack-wire

This 1869 Castello newspaper ad listed James Nixon as superintendent. Pfening Archives.

DAN CASTELLO, THE NAPOLEON OF SHOWMEN! COMING TO WYTHEVILLE, MARCH 24TH, WITH HIS GREAT SHOW!

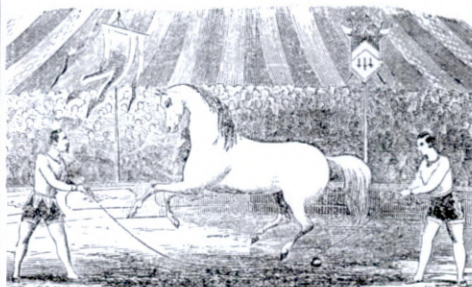
JAMES NIXON.....Superintendent.
DAN CASTELLO.....Manager.
EGBERT C. HOWES.....Treasurer.
CHARLES C. PELL.....General Business Agent.

This Establishment offers for the season of 1869,
MORE NOVELTIES, GREATER ATTRACTIONS, A FINER
EXHIBITION, AND A BETTER CIRCUS,
Than has ever been presented to the people of this Continent.

DAN CASTELLO
WILL APPEAR AS CLOWN,
At each and every performance, and introduce his
HIGH SCHOOL OF EQUINES!
The members of which constitute the
ONLY REAL HORSE SHOW
In the United States, in fact, in the World.

THE EDUCATED MENEGE

Comprises: "CZAR"—The Majestic, FLOATING CLOUD—The Beauty, BLUE
LICK—The Pride of Kentucky. The "Incarnation of Fun."



WHO? A JANUARY.

And those two comical four footed Comedians,

"ARTEMUS" AND "TIMOTHY."

Mr. Dan Castello takes special pride and peculiar satisfaction in being enabled to
Present, for the first time, to an American people, the

BRAZILLIAN FAMILY!

A TRULY GIFTED HOUSEHOLD!

Among whom is

MARTINI LOWANDA,

The large back Rider of the age,

SIGNORITTA CARLOTTA,

The beautiful brunette of the Tropics,

YOUNG JOSIE LOWANDA,

The Boy Wonder, and

CARLOS LOWANDA,

The Master of the Arena.

The Strength of DAN CASTELLO'S CIRCUS has been augmented by the engage-
ment of

LITTLE MINNIE,

The Youngest, Smallest and Prettiest Girl who has ever essayed an appearance in
the Arena.

MR. WILLIAM SPARKES,

The Modern Hercules—A Man of Cunning, Muscle and Balance.

MR. CHARLES RIVER S,

The Protean Artist.

HENRY NORTH.

Who as an Acrobat maintained a Leading Position in the American Circus, Paris.



and contortion acts.¹⁰ George S. Cole, who was said to have a quarter interest in the firm, was treasurer, assisted by John Brennan. George Roscoe was the advertiser. Admission to the building was 50¢ for the parquet and dress circle, 75¢ for reserved chairs, and 25¢ for children under ten.

Nixon's promotional style remained consistent. For those fearful of the circus atmosphere, parents were reassured that "nothing inconsistent with the most rigid morality will be permitted or tolerated in or about the building." The proprietor stressed the advantages of comfort and permanency over ordinary traveling circuses and menageries, a promotional tactic he had used against Barnum, one might recall, in the fall of 1862. The advertisements promised this hippodramatic institution would be the largest and coolest place of amusement in the city.

Nixon was off to a good start. On June 3 he added Mlle. Geraldine and Mons. Leopold, featured double trapeze artists. Their "Lulu Sensation Act" was well received, as Geraldine stood erect on a low stage and through some contrivance was hurled into the air for a distance of around 20 feet and caught by Leopold who was hanging on a trapeze bar by his feet. Also, Commodore Foote and his sister, the "Fairy Queen," with their Lilliputian ponies and miniature carriage, were new to the company at this time. Ling Look, the fire king, and brother appeared on the 10th. Added, too, was Prof. Chapman's trained horses, and the riding goat Sebastian.

For a premiere production, Nixon selected *Cinderella*, which opened on the 19th with a cast of over seventy children, all decked out in \$4,000 worth of costumes. The reader will recall this piece being a favorite of our man, he having staged it on numerous occasions. The extravaganza had been scheduled to open on the previous day but, according to an item in the *Chicago Tribune*, a postponement was due to "the great labor involved, and the excessive expenditure."¹¹

The variety acts continued alongside *Cinderella*. In addition to the usual riding and leaping, Yamadiva, the man serpent, performed his remarkable feats of contortion, and Ling Look in-

explicitly swallowed his swords and ate his sticks of fire to the amazement of the auditors. Leopold and Geraldine displayed a fearless athleticism in their gymnastic exercises until they closed on the 20th and moved on to Boston. Ling Look and brother Yamadiva left two days later. Their places were taken by the popular Japanese troupe which returned on the 24th.

There was competition from visiting circuses during the month of June. Forepaugh's Museum, Menagerie and Circus opened there on the 3rd to crowded houses. And L. B. Lent's New York Circus arrived on the 17th for four days with the likes of Charles Fish, John Henry Cooke, William Dutton, and Caroline Rolland. Then, quite abruptly on July 6th, Nixon's season closed with a complimentary benefit for him. With the stable cleared of equine odors and the 25 x 30 foot portable stage replacing the circus ring, Tony Pastor's variety troupe moved in for the week of July 8; after which, the place was presumably re-configured when Chiarini's circus arrived on August 5 and remained through the 24th. Three days later the Yeddo Japanese Troupe returned for another run at the Chicago patrons; after which, everything went dark.

But, as we have seen, Nixon was not a man to remain idle for long. Having experienced the success of the Royal Yeddo Japanese Troupe, he placed them under contract for a year with plans of booking them into the principal cities of the country. And he was still in possession of the amphitheatre. A New York *Clipper* ad of August 17 stressed its size and advantages—an immense pavilion, situated as it was in the best location in the city, splendidly decorated, and arranged with stage and arena, seating a potential of \$1,500 nightly, available from August 26th on. Then on October 12th a new and larger ad appeared, announcing the place "thoroughly renovated and re-decorated for the coming fall and winter season." The "immense pavilion" had apparently been converted into a cozy and well arranged theatre.

A new company managed by N. D. Roberts, under the title of Roberts' Combination, open for business on September 30. It was advertised as "Comprising More Novelties, More Talent, and More New Faces, than ever seen together in this or any other city." The program included comic vocalist William Pastor, "Chicago's Reigning Favorite"

Billy Manning, banjoist E. M. Hall, the Weston Sisters, featured in song and dance; and Miss Franke Christie, "the Best Fancy Danseuse in America."¹²

The place came alive again on December 16 when Buffalo Bill Cody, Texas Jack Omohundro, Josephine Morlacchi, Ned Buntline and company premiered an artless drama, *The Scouts of the Prairie*. Their memorable appearance has been recorded by the various biographers of Cody; all of whom relate the same questionable account of how the tenancy at the Amphitheatre occurred, but none reveal its source. With these words of caution, I recount the purported incident.

Desiring to open the play in Chicago and realizing that Nixon's theatre was the only one left standing after the fire with the necessary seating capacity, Buntline entered into contractual discussions with the lessor. He promised as a main attraction the appearance of two genuine scouts and twenty Indians.

Nixon had no illusions about the merits of a play written by a dime novelist and enacted by a group of rough amateurs, but anticipated Chicago audiences would pay to see live Indians, since circuses had previously used Indian troupes to good advantage. A deal was struck. Buntline was to supply the company of performers, the play, and the billboard art; Nixon was responsible for the use of the theatre and its attendants, the orchestra, and local printing. Buntline's share of the gross receipts was to be 60%.

But wait! When Nixon found out that the play had not been written and that there wasn't an Indian in sight, he was furious and the contract was torn up. Not to be dismissed so easily, Buntline leased the place outright for a week, paying the required \$600 in cash. He then proceeded to his hotel, hired the clerks as stenographers, and produced the piece in a matter of four hours. A bona fide Italian actress was engaged to play an Indian princess and a group of "ham actors" were picked up off the streets of Chicago to be passed off as "red skins" and the play opened on schedule to a first night gross of \$2,800. After a week of packed houses the troupe of pseudo

performers moved on to St. Louis and future prosperity.¹³

It has been suggested that Nixon had an interest in the company and went along on the tour. Supporting evidence of this comes from a discovery by Dr. Robert D. Pepper of a deposition Nixon gave on behalf of a Mr. Speck, who was suing Ned Buntline for false arrest. In the legal paper, drawn up at Saco, Maine, March 21, 1873, Nixon states his present occupation to be the business manager of the Ned Buntline Combination Troupe, a position he had filled since the start of the company some thirteen weeks previous.¹⁴

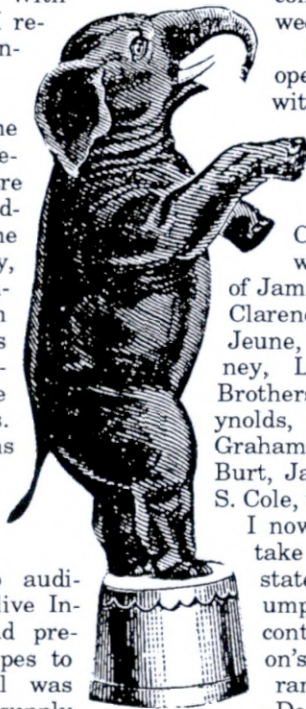
Nixon's Amphitheatre opened again in mid-March with a circus, Messrs.

Clapp & Co, proprietors. The firm, under the title of J. W. Wilder & Co's National

Circus, took occupancy with a troupe comprised of James Robinson and Master Clarence, Frank Pastor, Le-Jeune, Burt; Shappee & Whitney, Leon Brothers LaSalle Brothers, Tom Clifford, W. Reynolds, Albert F. Aymar, Sam Graham, Mr. Nellcourt, Nellie Burt, James Cooke and George S. Cole, treasurer.

I now stop for a moment to take stock and consider the state of things since the triumphant tour across the continent to California. Nixon's 1870 New York Circus ran aground in Texas in December of that year. His Amphitheatre in New York City, which had opened in December of 1871, lasted less than a month. And his valiant attempt at operating an amphitheatre in burned out Chicago became an off-again-on-again commodity, one which shortly faded into oblivion. He has abandoned his New York residency for Chicago, an action for which I can offer no explanation; for he was a dominant figure there within the 1860's entertainment scene. And now, with his removal to a fledgling metropolis, his fortunes have declined and his trail of activity has become difficult to follow.

In 1874, Nixon's friend, Dan Castello, took him on as an assistant director at P. T. Barnum's Great Roman Hippodrome. An abandoned building situated on Fourth Avenue between 26th and 27th Streets had been leased from the New York, New



Haven, and Hartford Railroad company in 1873 by P. T. Barnum, W. C. Coup, Dan Castello, and S. H. Hurd.

Barnum revealed in his autobiography that the place was enlarged and remodeled, creating seating accommodations for 2,800 at an expense of \$60,000, but such figures vary depending upon the source. The Hippodrome opened on April 27, 1874, as a place for equestrian entertainment featuring "The Congress of Nations." P. T. Barnum was the nominal proprietor; W. C. Coup, general manager; S. H. Hurd, superintendent and treasurer; Dan Castello and James M. Nixon, "directors of amusements;" C. W. Fuller, general agent; and D. S. Thomas, press agent. The main entrance was on Madison Avenue, the gallery entrance on Fourth Avenue. As one passed through the main entrance, the whole length of the right side of the building was filled with cages. The left side was occupied as stables for the ring stock. The parquet was furnished with cane-bottom chairs; the orchestra section, extending nearly the full length of one side, with patent iron folding chairs. A gallery of plain seats was laid out at one end of the arena; the dress-circle at the other end was outfitted with benches covered with carpeting.

In the pre-opening advertising, the Hippodrome was touted as "The Event of 1874," occupying an entire block bounded by Madison and Fourth Avenues, 26th and 27th Streets, "at an expense of nearly one million dollars." There was to be "the largest collection of living wild animals in the world," along with "The Grand Congress of Nations, the most magnificent and dazzling spectacle ever witnessed in this country," including hurdle and flat races; gymnastic acts; and pony, elephant and chariot races. Admission prices were listed as orchestra, \$1; balcony, 75¢; family circle, 50¢; gallery, 25¢; private boxes, holding four, \$8. A "grand parade of valuable stock forwarded by Mr. Barnum from Europe" was to occur on Saturday morning, April 25, starting at the Hippodrome and proceeding through 26th Street to Third Avenue, to the Bowery, to Canal Street, to Broadway, to 14th Street, to Fifth Avenue, to 49th Street, to Madison Avenue, and ending at 27th Street and the Hippodrome.¹⁵

The press was invited to a dress rehearsal prior to the opening and a large number of prominent citizens

were guests of the proprietors to preview the well publicized event. The public run-through had been scheduled for Wednesday, April 22, but was postponed until Friday because, while Nixon was sitting in a chariot observing an earlier rehearsal, a horse smashed into it, leaving the equestrian director severely injured. But by Friday he was able to conduct his duties with an arm well bandaged and frayed nerves becalmed. However, Dan Castello was home, sick with pneumonia. And P. T. Barnum would not return from Europe until the 30th.

From a New York Times account of the evening, we learn that the exhibition opened with a brilliant pageant entitled "The Congress of Nations," in which most of the courts of Europe and the East were represented by embassies "accurately and splendidly attired." First in the procession came England, represented by an entry of heralds followed by knights bearing the national standard. Then came the royal carriage, on which the likeness of Queen Victoria sat enthroned, surrounded by an escort of Life Guards, Grenadiers, Highlanders, and knights in full armor. France was next, with horsemen representing Napoleon I and his generals, accompanied by an escort of the Imperial Guard and a company of Zouaves. After this came the Cross Keys of the Holy See, borne by a standard bearer and followed by seven guards. His Holiness the Pope entered on a chariot guarded by eight members of the College of Cardinals and followed by a deputation of Bishops. The German contingent consisted of a company of Prussian soldiers, the Kaisers Wilhelm, Bismarck, and Von Moltke being on horseback and accompanied by imperial escorts. This was followed by the "Sublime Porte," with a staff mounted on Arabian steeds and "shimmering with Oriental splendor." Italy was next, represented by a troupe of sharpshooters, Re Galantuomo and his staff, and a company of Garibaldians. The Pasha of Egypt and the Czar of Russia followed in the procession, after which the spectators beheld the Dragon Car, on which was seated the Son of the Moon, the Sovereign of the Celestial Empire. The Stars and Stripes brought up the rear, followed by men

in the garb of settlers, a body of Revolutionary militia, a company of United States Infantry, and a tribe of Indians.¹⁶

The spectacle was supervised by a series of races and variety performances. There was flat racing between men mounted on English thoroughbreds; racing between men standing astride two horses; Roman two-horse chariots racing; English jockey racing; hurdle racing and, let us not fail to mention, elephant, monkey, and ostrich racing. Along with the equestrianism, there were various specialty acts: the gymnastic feats of Millson & Lazelle and the Levanion Brothers; Mons. Joignerey juggled cannon balls and lifted two ponies some four or five inches from the ground while hanging by his feet from a trapeze; Mons. Loyal performed on the triple trapeze; and Signor Leon, dressed as an Indian, demonstrated his skill with a lasso.

Nixon, in addition to serving as equestrian director, gave the signal for starting the races, struck the warning bell for the homestretch, and decided who was the victor—a combination of judge, bailiff and jury. The *Clipper* expressed an approval with, "James M. Nixon, the veteran circus manager, discharges his arduous duties as superintendent with an easy grace and the utmost fairness."¹⁷

The season ended on August 1 and the company went on the road under canvas with ostensibly the same program that had been presented to New York audiences, with road prices set at \$1 and 50¢. The magnitude of the event restricted the stands to only major cities. The Boston date began on August 3 and ran for two weeks. The company then moved to Philadelphia for another two weeks beginning August 25. Previously, the proprietors had encountered difficulty in finding a location there—an offer for the Athletic Baseball Grounds being rejected; but, finally, they set down on a lot at the junction of Broad, Norris, and Diamond Streets. The public response was so great there that the stay was extended an additional week, closing September 11. Baltimore was next with a September 14 opening; then a week in Allegheny City, Pennsylvania, beginning September 29; and, finally, Cincinnati from October



13th through the 24th before the outfit was shipped back to New York City.

During the company's departure the Hippodrome building was altered for winter performances. A new roof of iron and glass replaced the canvas one and hot air furnaces were installed. The interior was re-decorated, new matting laid on the concrete flooring, the railing around the interior arena was lowered, and rows of gas lights added. In the auditorium, the cane-seated chairs and private boxes on the Madison Avenue end were removed and replaced with benches, making the seating space at either end of the building available for the 50¢ admissions. Iron folding chairs, upholstered in red enameled cloth were placed on the 26th Street side, which, along with the seats on the opposite side, were scaled at \$1.

The (Barnum's) Hippodrome re-opened on November 2, the program commencing as before with "The Congress of Nations" That completed, Satsuma and Little All Right demonstrated feats of balancing. A flat race with five ladies followed. In turn, a small carriage drawn by ponies and driven by and carrying a pack of monkeys then coursed the arena. There was a two-horse chariot race between Miss Salisbury and Mattie Lewis. An English stag hunt was represented by a number of ladies and gentlemen clad in hunting attire and mounted on spirited animals and headed by a pack of English hounds with their keeper. They paraded around the outer arena before entering the inner area for "the meet," which was interrupted when a stag bounded in and was at once pursued at top speed by the hounds and hunters several times around the hippodrome track. Following this spectacle six youthful riders contested in a pony race; English and American jockeys vied for supremacy on thoroughbreds; as did Messrs. Stevens, North and Hogle in a Roman standing race upon two horses. Mlle. Victoria walked the high-wire with feet encased in baskets; then, removing them, crossed and re-crossed at a rapid gait; and

closed by riding across on a velocipede.

Scenes of prairie life were portrayed by Signor Leon's troupe of Indian and Mexican riders. Indians, with their squaws, after returning from a hunt, were seen erecting their wigwams and preparing camp in the inner enclosure. While at the same time, in the outer track, there was a portrayal of natives capturing a white prisoner with a lasso and tying him to the back of a swift running horse and sending him off to meet his Maker. There was a foot race of runners wearing snow shoes, followed by an Indian hurdle race.

There was a chase of a chieftain's daughter by a number of suitors, the first to lay hold of her being promised her hand in marriage. Miss Maud Oswald impersonated the Indian maiden and Signor Leon was her captor. The sequence was terminated by the appearance of a group of Mexican riders who entered into a mock battle with the Indians and eventually chased them from the arena.

The Indians disposed of, the equestrianism continued. There was a race by monkeys mounted on ponies, a race with elephants, a race with camels; and Miss Grady and Mons. Arnaudraced with Roman chariots driven with four horses abreast. The racing over, the program concluded with a representation of "At Donnybrook Fair."

A new spectacle, "The Fete at Peking," was introduced November 23, replacing "The Congress of Nations" portion of the program. With the interior profusely decorated with numerous and colorful flags, the grand procession included the appearance of a Chinese Emperor, seated in a palanquin borne by a number of Mandarins and followed by a cavalry of Tartars; and ladies of the Emperor's court also borne on litters. There were lantern and fan bearers, servants beating gongs, a winged dragon guarded by citizen soldiery and Mandarins bearing spears. After circling the track, the Emperor and his court took seats upon a platform, while the cavalry and foot soldiers performed a number of evolutions; followed by a Chinese ballet under the direction of Prof. George W.

Smith, with the dancers led by Carrie Seymour and Mattie Lewis. Next, the Jackley Family of acrobats performed on a series of raised platforms placed at equal distances about the interior. The Kenebel Brothers cavorted as Chinese clowns. Satsuma and Little All Right performed feats of equilibrium, followed by Yamadiva, the contortionist. The spectacle concluded with Ling Look and his fire-eating act while mounted on the top of a car drawn by a number of horses. As the procession came to an end, a display of fireworks erupted from the car, leaving Ling Look standing amid the inferno.¹⁸ The rest of the program remained relatively unchanged. As an incentive to draw the youngsters, a 25¢ admission for children under ten years of age was offered on and after November 30, with the feeding of the menagerie animals following on the close of each matinee.

The pantomime of *Bluebeard* was announced for the Christmas season beginning December 23. For the production a large excavation was made in the center of the arena and covered with a platform which contain a series of traps. A subterranean passage connected this with the dressing rooms on the Fourth Avenue side of the building. By the use of machinery below, *Bluebeard's* castle and other scenic devices were made to rise and sink as occasion required. A large, movable platform, made in sections, was used for the ballet dancing. And paraphernalia for the various pantomime tricks were stationed along the sides of the arena and rapidly placed into position by a corps of workmen.¹⁹

The extravagant pantomime included the portrayal of a Moorish village with a Turkish ballet in progress, a grand procession featuring the Great Pashaw, *Bluebeard* mounted upon an elephant, etc. *Bluebeard's* castle arose from the ground in full view of the spectators, followed by a grand ballet. There appeared a chamber, within which were exhibited the headless wives of *Bluebeard*; there was the arrival of Selim and his friends to rescue Fatima and Irene; there was the usual transformation of *Bluebeard* into Clown, Selim into Harlequine, etc.²⁰ All the ingredients of a traditional Christmas pantomime.

The management made a number of adjustments following the holidays. Admission prices were reduced to 30¢ for the family circle, 50¢ for orchestra chairs, \$1 for reserved seats opposite the grand stand, and



half price for children in each section. This change increased the low priced attendance but slowed the purchase of the more expensive seats. *Bluebeard* and "The Fete at Pekin" were withdrawn and the ballet corps dispensed with after January 2. Only the various races, the Indian life on the prairie, and the "View of Donnybrook Fair" remained. Beginning with January 14, trotting races for a purse were introduced, which tended to revive attendance somewhat. By the beginning of February a tournament scene was added, consisting of armored knights, representing various states of the Union, with the victor crowned by a lady symbolizing the Queen of Beauty.

On February 15 a final novelty was presented, called "Salesday at Tattersall, or, Scenes Among the English Turfmen." The pageant reenacted a horse auction, showing how buyers were taken in by sharpers, all amid a background of street singers who warbled appropriate ballads. This scene was followed by a burlesque race between two broken down steeds, terminating with police arresting the jockeys for cruelty to animals. The trotting matches continued until the Hippodrome closed on February 27, 1875.

Nixon took a benefit at the Hippodrome on March 22. Through Barnum's generosity he was given free use of the building for the occasion. "Mr. Nixon's well-known popularity and long career in the equestrian profession as performer and manager," a writer remarked, "will doubtless insure a large attendance, and enable him to put before the public a strong array of volunteer talent."²¹

The Hippodrome reopened on March 29. The program at this time included two scenes from *Bluebeard*—a guard procession and a march by a group of ladies attired in armor; there were feats of balancing by Satsuma and Little All Right; a flat race between five female riders; a carriage driven around the track by monkeys; a two-horse chariot race; a Shetland pony race; a Roman standing race by Stevens, Hogle, and North; Mme. D'Atalie's cannon ball act; scenes of Indian life; a race between English and American jockeys; a race between monkeys on ponies; a female hurdle race; a four-horse chariot race; gymnastics by Lazzelle & Millson and the whole

closing with "The Fete at Pekin."²² For the week of April 5 "The Congress of Nations" was re-introduced, with new costumes and harnesses and with chariots re-gilded. Performances were given for only the week, after which the doors were closed for the indoor season on April 10.

This two-week reopening of the Hippodrome was merely a means of preparing for the road, a slimming down and stream-lining of the original program to make a tour of one-night stands feasible. P. T. Barnum's Hippodrome opened under canvas in Philadelphia for a week on April 12, which served as the springboard for a six month odyssey throughout the middle-western states.

An unexpected cascade of spring rain and snow welcomed the opening night crowd and during the early morning hours proved too much for the main tent to withstand; it gave way and buried some twenty employees beneath its folds, none of whom were seriously injured. A group of sailmakers immediately went to work repairing the damage; and, the canvas rehabilitated, the show reopened on the 15th.²³ A week in Boston began on the 17th, which was followed by jumps that took the show into Michigan, Ohio, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Wisconsin, and Minnesota.²⁴ Barnum's Roman Hippodrome closed the 1875 season in Cleveland on October 7, 8, 9.

Nixon visited the Coup circus during its Chicago stand in 1882. Pfening Archives.

Barnum had hopes of shipping the show to South America and had advertised for a partner. None materializing, he announced plans for disposal of the property of both the Roman Hippodrome and his World's Fair. The wardrobe was sold at the Hippodrome building in New York City beginning November 16; the rest of the equipment and stock at his quarters in Bridgeport on the 29th. The animals to be auctioned off were put on exhibition prior to that date and admission prices of 25¢ and 15¢ entitled the curious locals to browse amongst Barnum's collection of beasts.²⁵

For all practical purposes our story ends here. Nixon was a private man. There is no mention of him in T. Allston Brown's 1870 biographical dictionary, *History of the American Stage*, even though Brown was an apparent friend and former employee. Brown does include both of the wives, Caroline and Emma, and the former companion, Isabel Cubas. How strange. Remember, this is a man famous for his "flaming, regardless of expense advertisements"—unless, of course, Nixon requested obscurity, and in so doing contributed to his own journey to oblivion.

There is little left on record. We know that Nixon was in Europe in the spring of 1876.²⁶ After two years with the Hippodrome it could have been a vacation trip. In 1879 he was said to be running a cheap theatre in Chicago. At this time he teamed with Oliver P. Myers in an attempt to establish a zoological garden there.

Myers was a circus agent earlier in the decade, but was at the time connected with the passenger department of the Pittsburgh and Fort Wayne Railroad in Chicago.²⁷ The two set a goal of raising \$100,000 at \$50 a share. They made an arrangement with J. M. French to use his animals—a group of that included an elephant and four lions broken to an act by Paul Schroff—which had been leased out to various circuses over the years since French's Great Oriental Circus went off the road in 1868. After raising half of the money, they were ready to present an animal display plus a summer theatre seating 4,000 people. But the day before French was to ship the animals from his Woodward Avenue farm in Detroit the barn caught fire and destroyed the lot. With only half the projected money in

NOW OPEN ON LAKE FRONT,
AFTERNOON AND EVENING,
W. C. COUP'S
NEW
UNITED MONSTER SHOWS,
VAST PARIS HIPPODROME,
Under the only SEVENTY-FIVE CENTER-POLE CANVAS in the world, with RACE TRACK FORTY FEET WIDE, Museum, Hall of Statues, Menagerie, Aquarium, and Great World's Fair.
3 IMMENSE CIRCUS TROUPE in
4 GREAT RINGS,
The Wonderful and Only Broncho Horses.
Prices as usual. 3,000 RESERVED OPERA CHAIRS. Reserved seats may be had at BRAINARD & SONS' MUSIC STORE, 136 State street, at the usual small advance.
Coups Show and Hippodrome will visit MATTOON June 26; CHAMPAIGN, 27; KANKAKEE, 28; LA SALLE, 29; BLOOMINGTON, 30; DECATUR, July 1; PEORIA, July 3; SPRINGFIELD, July 4; PITTSFIELD, July 5.

the bank and no animals to display, the partners abandoned the project.²⁸

We know Nixon was still in Chicago in 1882, when on June 22 he appeared at W. C. Coup's circus during an engagement in that city. It was for a match between Tony Denier and Frank Clynes of Chicago in a four-horse chariot race with a purse of \$500. Nixon represented Denier; Arthur Cambridge, a noted temperance advocate, was Clynes' second.²⁹ In 1886 the name of James M. Nixon was again related to the activity of Buffalo Bill Cody. A *Clipper* item announced that the "olden-day circus manager" had gone to England to make arrangements for Cody's wild west show's first trip abroad.³⁰ There is no word of his activities there or how long he was away. There is, sadly to say, no mention of him again until Monday, September 18, 1899, when the *New York Times* carried a small item under the heading "Old Circus Proprietor Dead." "James M. Nixon, at one time the proprietor of James M. Nixon's Circus, died on Saturday of Bright's disease at the Putnam House, Twenty-seventh Street and Fourth Avenue. Mr. Nixon was eighty years old. His circus performed at the old Hippodrome, on the spot where the Fifth Avenue Hotel now stands. It also performed in different parts of the country and abroad. Mr. Nixon had for fifteen years past been living at the Putnam House, and was a well-known character in that locality. He leaves two daughters."

NOTES

1. This was confirmed by Stuart Thayer in a letter, May 19, 1996. An assertion by W. Gordon Yadon in *Banner Line*, March 15, 1968, p. 5, that Nixon was in partnership with Howes for the 1865 tour is most likely erroneous.

2. Charles Bernard, *Billboard*, September 1, 1934, p. 58. Among the troupe were Mlle. Carlotta DeBerg, Mlle. Josephine, James Cooke, Mr. and Mrs. Dan Castello, Little Dan, Charley Parker, James and Mrs. DeMott, Horace Nichols, Ferdinand Tourniaire, William Benton, Tom Shields, August Lehman, and Joe Randolph.

3. T. Allston Brown, *History of the American Stage*, p. 231.

4. *New York Clipper*, June 15, 1912, p. 9.

5. Frederick (Maryland) *Examiner*, February 26; April 15, 1868, from the J. D. Draper collection. The roster included Dan Castello and Julian Kent, clowns; and the Lowande family, Brazilian equestrians--Alexander, Clorinda, Martinhp, Abelardo and Natilia; William Sparks, Herculean performer; Henry

Beatty, acrobat; John Batcheller, leaper; Prof. Nash, elephant trainer; and Mr. Winners, lion tamer.

6. *Examiner*, December 25, 1867.

7. Notes given the author by Stuart Thayer. Here Thayer states: "The story, slightly misrepresented, has been told over and over these last few years as the centennial of the trip was observed. Suffice it to say that the show had the Van Amburgh Fielding band chariot with it, from all available evidence went through Colorado, Utah and Nevada and played a month in California before being sold to Lee, High & Baker, western showmen."

8. The company consisted of Frank J. Howes, master of the circle, and his wife Marie; the Runnells family; Sam Melville, clown; the Wambold Brothers, George and Henry, with their trained dogs; William Naylor, W. Bell, Conchita Ronzati, Minnie Wells, J. Risley, J. G. Adams, George Ward, Fred Sylvester, and the Fosters. Of the Foster family, John Foster was clown; Mrs. John, an *entree* rider; daughter Emma, a child equestrienne; and Mamie, a tight-rope *danseuse*. Burnell Runnells and Frank Howes were in charge of the inside concert. Lafayette Nixon had the refreshment concession and the sideshow, assisted by W. McIntyre. The Albino Family and the Chinese Giant were featured. C. C. Pell was the general agent; George Stanhope, bill poster; Prof. McCann, band leader; and T. Davey, treasurer.

9. Brown, II, pp. 376-389.

10. William Worrell and James Maguire were the clowns. The Stokes sisters were there, Katie and Ella, performing their equestrienne feats; and Burnell Runnells and sons, the boys doing a double part act; Signor Francis, the juggler; Harry and George Wambold, with trained dogs and monkeys; the Lascell Brothers on the trapeze; Charles Sherwood and son; William Naylor, Charles Seaman, and Kline & Murtz.

11. *Chicago Tribune*, June 18, 1872, an item from the Chang Reynolds papers, Circus World Museum.

12. Others on the program were Dave Wilson, John F. Oberist, John Burk, Frank Kent, and an orchestra and brass band under the direction of Frank R. Cardella *Chicago Tribune*, September 28, 1872, an item from the Chang Reynolds papers, Circus World Museum.

13. One source has indicated that Nixon made arrangements for a piece of the production, but I have found nothing to substantiate the claim.

14. Notes made by Robert D. Pepper while researching the dramas performed by William F. Cody. Pepper's notes on the Chicago Amphitheater have been gratefully received by the author.

15. *New York Times*, April

24, 1874, p. 7.

16. *Ibid.*, April 25, 1874, p. 7.

17. *Ibid.*, June 6, 1874, p. 78.

18. *Ibid.*, December 5, 1874, p. 286.

19. *Ibid.*, January 2, 1875, p. 318.

20. *Ibid.*, December 26, 1874, p. 310.

21. *Ibid.*, March 20, 1875, p. 406.

22. *Ibid.*, April 10, 1875, p. 14.

23. *Ibid.*, April 24, 1875, p. 31.

24. The *Clipper* printed the following routing: Detroit, June 28, 29; Toledo, Ohio, 30; Grand Rapids, Michigan, July 5; Kalamazoo, 6; Fort Wayne, Indiana, 7; Logansport, 8; Lafayette, 9; Danville, Illinois, 10; Chicago, 12, for a week; Jacksonsville, 26; Springfield, 27; Decatur, 28; Bloomington, 29; Peoria, 30; Galesburg, 31; Quincy, August 2; Keokuk, Iowa, 3; Burlington, 4; Ottumwa, 5; Oskaloosa, 6; Des Moines, 7; Iowa City, 9; Davenport, 10; Rock Island, Illinois, 11; Freeport, 12; Dubuque, Iowa, 13; Waterloo, 14; Owatonna, Minnesota, 16; Minneapolis, 17; St. Paul, 18; Red Wing, 19; Winona, 20; LaCrosse, Wisconsin, 21; Madison, 23; Janesville, 24; Fond du Lac, 25; Oshkosh, 26; Milwaukee, 27, 28; Rockford, Illinois, 30; Dixon, 31; Clinton, Iowa, September 1; Cedar Rapids, 2; Marshalltown, 3; Boome, 5; Omaha, Nebraska, 6; Council Bluffs, Iowa, 7; St. Joseph, Missouri, 8, 9; Richmond, Indiana, October 1; Dayton, Ohio, 2; Columbus, 4; Mt. Vernon, 5; Akron, 6.

25. *New York Clipper*, November 13, 263; November 27, 1875, p. 279.

26. *Ibid.*, June 24, 1876, p. 100.

27. Myers was connected with J. E. Warner & Co, 1871; contracting agent, John Robinson's, 1873; press agent, Montgomery Queen's, 1875, general advertiser, 1876.

28. Thayer's notes.

29. Chindahl card file, Robert L. Parkinson Library and Research Center, Circus World Museum.

30. The daughters were most likely Adelaide and Frank.

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*The Spirit of the Season...
The Birth of a Special Child...
Christmas experienced through the eyes of a child...
Remember the simple joys and pleasures of friends, family and faith...*

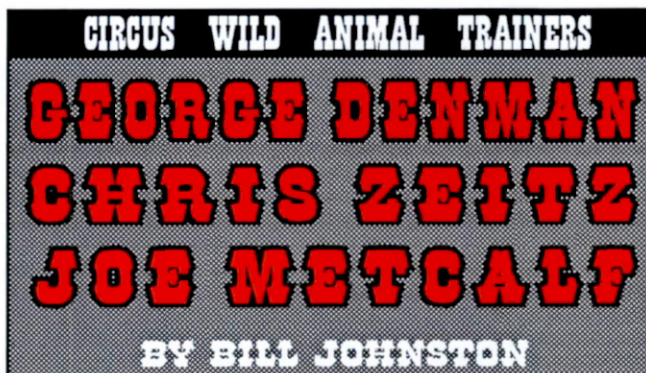
In the history of the American circus there have been many fine elephant trainers. Unfortunately, not all have received recognition for their efforts. George Denman, Chris Zeitz and Joe Metcalf appeared on the circus scene about the same time, and devoted their careers to training elephants. Denman learned his trade on the Barnum show; Zeitz was an excellent breaker; Metcalf was known as a good handler of bad elephants.

George Denman

George Edward Denman was born in New York City in 1871. At age seventeen he journeyed to Bridgeport, Connecticut winter quarters of the Barnum & Bailey Circus. There he joined out in the elephant department, working for George Conklin.

He made the five year tour of Europe. In his book *The Ways of the Circus*, George Conklin wrote about the death of the Barnum elephant Fritz: "It happened in Tours, France. The evening show had commenced and I was getting the menagerie down to the train. We had at the time some two dozen elephants, and I was sending them down chained together in twos and threes. Fritz was in the lead, with Babe and Columbia chained on either side of him and in charge of driver George Bates. I was on my horse, just behind the elephants and in front of the line of cage wagons.

"We were about halfway to the railroad and just passing through a little park, with everything going nicely, when all of a sudden Fritz made for Bates as best he could with the other two elephants hitched to him. At once the whole band of elephants was in a mix-up. The road was more than full and the whole outfit came to a stop. Bates ran for his life. There were a half dozen other men with the elephants, but at the first indication of trouble they all disappeared, each looking for a hole. The only man who stayed by me was a fellow known about the show as Deafy [Denman]. I rode up in front of Fritz as quickly as I could and tried to calm him down, but I saw at once it was no use, so I told Deafy to get some chains, and be quick about it.



"The chains we wanted were under some other stuff, which had to be unloaded to get at them, so it was quite a few minutes before he came back with them. Meanwhile I was doing what I could to keep Fritz from bolting. I had done a good deal of work with one of the elephants chained to him, called Babe, and she would do anything I told her. So, keeping Fritz's attention on trying to get me, I had Babe pull round in the opposite direction, and in this way hampered him and took up his attention until Deafy came with the chains.

"Then by the same methods I worked Fritz round near a tree and gave Deafy a chance to get a chain round his hind leg and the tree. The tree was some inches in diameter, but Fritz snapped it off immediately, and I had to work him round to a

George Denman 1871-1937. Circus World Museum collection.



larger one. Deafy managed to get a hitch round this, and it held. With one leg fast, it was a simple matter to fasten the other one. As soon as Fritz's hind feet were fastened the men began to appear from various directions and I had plenty of help. Still keeping Fritz's attention directed to me, I had Deafy, with some of those who were now willing to help him, get chains on Fritz's front feet and unfasten and take away

Babe and Columbia. Then with tackle I pulled him to the ground.

"By this time word had reached Mr. Bailey of the trouble with Fritz, and he ordered him killed. I tried to convince [Joseph T.] McCaddon, one of the directors, who had brought the word from Mr. Bailey, that it was unnecessary, and begged him to leave the elephant to me. I told him that, now I had him down, I could punish and regain control of him, and would guarantee to have him on board the train before the show was ready to start away in the morning. But Mr. Bailey's orders were imperative, and McCaddon insisted that Fritz be killed where he lay.

"As there was no choice in the matter, I went about preparing nooses. I had considerable difficulty in getting them round the animal's neck, but after a while I got them properly placed. By this time everyone had plenty of courage and it was no trouble to get upward of a hundred men to pull on the rope with all their strength, and in less than fifteen minutes after I gave the word poor Fritz was dead."

The first mention of Denman in a Barnum & Bailey route book is in 1903 where he is listed as an elephant keeper. In 1905 George Bates was elephant superintendent and Denman was an assistant superintendent. He remained in this position through the 1907 season. During this period he presented an elephant act in ring three.

In 1907 the Ringling brothers bought the Barnum show where Denman was employed. He remained as assistant elephant superintendent under Bates through the 1908 season, when Bates retired from the show.

The Ringling-owned Forepaugh-Sells Circus was taken off the road after the 1907 season. The title was revived in 1910 and Denman was selected as elephant

superintendent at a salary of \$70 per month. A three elephant act was bought from the Hagenbeck Zoo in Hamburg, Germany which Denman presented in the performance. The other eleven elephants on the show were Babe, Rubber, Media, Betz, Alice, Queen, Franchon, Lena, Romeo, Columbia and Lou.

He returned to the Ringling circus in 1911. The May 9 *Billboard* reported Denman presented an act with an elephant carrying a dog in his mouth. Other tricks included an elephant juggling dumbbells.

In 1912 Denman was elephant superintendent on Ringling Bros. World's Greatest Shows, a position he held for the rest of his career. That season he presented the center ring bull act with five young elephants.

In 1913 he introduced the elephant baseball routine in the performance in the center ring. In 1914 Denman used the elephant telephone stunts in the center ring routine.

The 1917 program listed, "A company of elephant actors giving imitations of jazz bands, presenting remarkable feats of equilibrium, operating telephones and offering many other amazing proofs of brute intelligence and sagacity, presented by M. G. (sic) Denman."

In 1919 when the Barnum and Ringling circuses were combined Denman was selected as elephant boss over Harry Mooney, the former Barnum show superintendent.

The 1920 elephant act in the traditional display 2 was listed in the program as, "Remarkably wise old elephants in wonderful displays of scarcely believable animal intelligence."

Due to the addition of wild animal acts in 1921 to the Ringling-Barnum performance the elephant act was moved to display 18, with Denman presenting the center ring group. There were thirty-two elephants on the show. In 1922 the herd numbered twenty-eight, presented in three rings by women. In 1923 there were thirty-three.

An interview published in the *New York Times* in April 1923 Denman told of training baby elephants: "I would rather train a dozen grown elephants than one baby," said Denman, who looks upon the 400 pound youngsters almost as fondly as any mother who wheels her offspring on Riverside Drive. "They are just like children. I cannot be harsh with them, for it scares them, and they



Denman, on horseback, leading the Ringling Bros. elephants in a 1918 parade. Circus World Museum collection.

run. They dread a licking as much as any youngster, and so I can't whip them, for they don't want to stay home and act if I do. I have to let them have their own way and develop their individuality after their own wishes. Then we get along finely together."

"The names of the young elephants are Marcella, Bingo, Emma, Alice, Mary and Joe. Marcella is the prize elephant and Joe is the sluggard, for they vary in temperament and brain capacity just as much as children in primary schools. They have to be handled with exceeding care and fed as thoughtfully as children, for their food disagrees with them if it is not properly mixed, and then they get sick and Denman has to stay up all night walking the floor with them. And walking the floor with a 400-pound child is some job, take it from Denman."

"The babies are all Indian elephants, only a few months out of the jungle. They cost about \$2,500 each, and one of them, Marcella, is worth at least \$5,000 now. Marcella, Denman thinks, is the most valuable elephant potentially in the country. She has a rare gift for learning, and unusual brain capacity. She does more tricks and does them better than all the other youngsters."

"Joe is the stubborn elephant. He is the bad boy of the outfit, sort of mentally backward. I can't do much with Joe, but he is learning slowly. He is 18 months old now, the youngest of the lot. Marcella is 2 1/2 years old, and the others are in between. Joe will do a figure eight in and around the tubs, and that is all. He will go around on a spindle on one leg two times and then hollers to beat the band and stops. He just won't do any more. He is like a sulky

child. There is only one idea in Alice's head, too. She will waltz on a tub, but that is all.

"Marcella walks on a tub, walks the plank and spins on one foot. Mary plays football, waltzes, goes around on the spindle on one foot and plays the drum. Emma will pick up the football with her trunk, waltzes, walks a barrel and plays the fiddle. Next year I will teach them some more and each year a little more until they have as many tricks as it is possible to teach an elephant--at least as many as they can do in the time allotted to them in the show. They are intelligent, but, like children, their intelligence grows as they get older. It is quite easy to see them progress and fully as fascinating as it is to watch the development of a child."

The season of 1924 brought an expansion of elephant acts to the Ringling-Barnum performance. With thirty-six bulls the elephant act included groups in three rings and on two stages. At the end thirty-two elephants appeared on the hippodrome track for a long mount. Training these acts was one of Denman's greatest achievements. The elephants on the show in 1924 were Babe, Bessie, Hattie, Ringling Trilby, Judy, Pinto, Little Modoc, Juno, Wilhelmina, John, Clara, Sammy, Dutch, Hazel, Queen, Rio, Romeo, Ringling Nellie, Barnum Nellie, Albert, Topsy, Katie, Lizzie, Fannie, Ringling Jennie, Palm, Marcella, Emma, Alice, Bingo, Mary, Joe, Blanche, Joyce, Mabel and Rose.

Ringling-Barnum toured thirty-five bulls both in 1925 and 1926. The herd was increased in 1927 to thirty-nine including Pawah the albino elephant from India. Denman seldom appeared in the circus performance from the middle 1920s on, leaving the performing to the assistant superintendents.

In the 1929 book *The Circus Menagerie* Edward P. Norwood told of Denman: "There are twenty-four men on elephants and George [Denman] likes to have all of them sleep on the lot. Three of the herd leaders, that is to say the assistants who handle the three big herds in the performance, bunk on cots in the menagerie track—one at either end and one opposite the middle of the line. The rest of the boys sleep in rows between them."

"I suppose that's Mr. Denman's place, the cot at the rear of menagerie wagon. But wouldn't the elephants be all right with just a part of the men on watch?"

"Ten to one, yes; and one to ten, no. And it's because of that one chance that something might go wrong that a wise superintendent of elephants insists upon full protection. There--see that group of stakes?"

"Those are what we call 'wind stakes,'" [Carl] Hathaway said. "Now an entire season might go by without them ever being needed, but they are driven just the same. Here's the reason: suppose a bad wind or an electrical storm comes up. Elephants don't like wind and they don't like pounding rain or lighting. In fact they don't cotton to anything they can't see or feel and so aren't able to figure out. Mystery always troubles them. Yet suppose a racket of that kind breaks loose in the middle of the night. If it's merely a mild storm of short duration the men can handle them right where they stand. But if there promises to be the least chance of trouble, George has the side wall raised, the bulls are marched out, chained to those wind stakes and faced into the storm. A few men couldn't manage that job but with the full quota here it's no trick at all."

In his book *Elephant Tramp* George Lewis gives further insight into Denman: "It was into this center of circus activity that I began my

way during the winter of 1928-1929. I had intended to go right to George 'Deafy' Denman, the superintendent of elephants, to ask for a job, but when I arrived I got cold feet. I was afraid he'd refuse to hire me, since I had quit him twice before without explaining why.

"Denman, who was almost totally deaf, had been superintendent of elephants with Ringling nearly thirty years. He had had thousands of men work for him during that time. They were men of every caliber, from cutthroats and murders to men who had become tired of respectable, well-paid positions and had fallen in love with elephants.

"Throughout the years, Deafy remained one of the kindest and most understanding bosses who ever handled such an assortment of characters. He never completely lost his temper, no matter how his patience was tried. The harshest words I ever hear him utter were, 'Gosh hang you lads.' That was his favorite phrase when things were going bad with his men getting drunk, fighting or mishandling the elephants.

"Many a circus owner in the old days carried a stout hickory cane around the lot to keep his elephant handlers and roustabouts in line, and some were overly anxious to wield the sticks to show who was boss.

"There was none of that with Deafy, although his assistants weren't all the same type. He had four assistant superintendents, each one working one of the elephant acts and helping with the handling of the men, there being about fifty employed in the elephant department at that time.

"Having lost my courage about asking Deafy for a job again, I headed for the menagerie instead. I thought maybe I could work as a cage man. That way, I'd be around

Denman's Ringling-Barnum herd in 1921. Pfening Archives

the place and would have a chance to run into Deafy and sound him out more casually on how he felt about me.

"Before I found the hiring boss for cage hands, one of the elephant men came into the winter quarters menagerie building and said, 'The Old Man wants to see you. You better trot over there right away.' As I approached, he glanced at me indifferently and said, 'Go see Shorty. He'll give you a meal ticket.'

"About a week before we were to leave for New York, Deafy called me into his quarters and told me he had decided to give me a lead. I was well pleased, because it meant I'd have two elephants of my own to ride each day from the train to the lot and back to the train at night.

"An extra [man] was never entrusted with the handling of an elephant, while the lead man, besides having charge of two or three elephants, got to stand guard in front of the bulls while they were in the menagerie and the patrons were looking at them.

"The thirty-five elephants were loaded into three 72-foot, double-length railroad cars. The men had another car similar to the elephant cars, except that it was equipped with berths and had a stateroom in the middle for Deafy.

"The car was coupled to the three elephant cars so the men always could be near their animals. There was a small compartment in one end of the car where an assistant boss made coffee and sandwiches and sold them to the men when the circus made long jumps and we didn't arrive in the next town in time for breakfast.

"An extra big top was carried in one end of this car. The circus carried it in case the one in use was destroyed in a storm or fire.

"We got to the [New York] Coliseum about noon, and found the heat hadn't been turned on in the building. The elephants didn't arrive



until evening, so Deafy kept them in their cars where at least they'd have warmth from their own bodies. The next morning we got some steel oil barrels, cut one end out of them and set them in the Coliseum where the elephants would be quartered. We built coke fires in the drums and managed to take off some of the chill.

"When we went to unload the elephants, though, we found the long trip and the cold had been too much for one of the oldest, Queen. She was lying dead inside the car."

The Ringling 1933 Golden Jubilee Tour opened in Madison Square Garden on April 8. The April 15 *Billboard* review told of display 2: "This year George Denman's pachyderms occupy the two other rings and stages. Many new stunts have been added to the repertoire of the massive mammals. They contribute their usual successions of pyramids. However on stage 2 the five bulls there assigned drew applause with their London bridge formations and were nicely received in a take off on a band, each bull simulating the playing of an instrument. Nice head and hind leg balancing contributed interest to the display."

During the New York engagement Denman became ill and was forced to leave the show. Bill Emery, one of his four assistants, was named elephant superintendent.

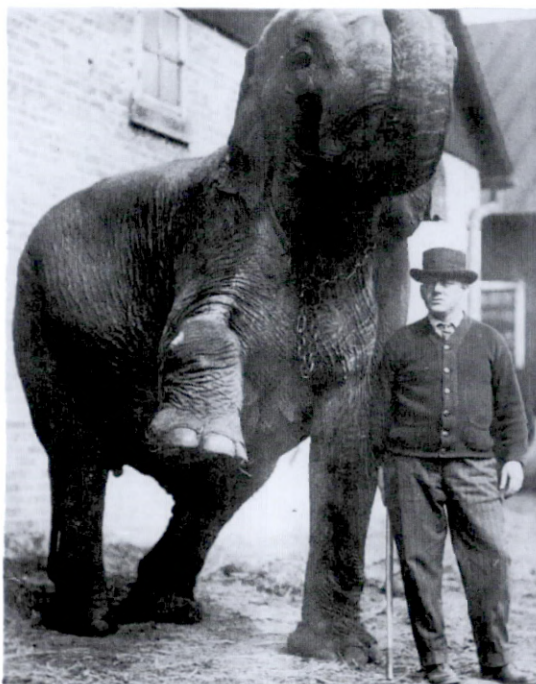
Denman hung up his bull hook for the last time and retired. He died of a heart attack on September 30, 1937 in Bridgeport, Connecticut.

Chris Zeitz

Christopher Joseph Zeitz was born in Dells, Wisconsin on April 8, 1877. He went ten miles south to Baraboo to join the elephant department of Ringling Bros. World's Greatest Shows in 1897.

He was a natural and took to elephants like he had been around them all his life. Pearl Souder was the superintendent of the Ringling herd in those years when it varied in number from ten to twenty-four. The first trio from 1888, Babe, Jewel and the African female Fannie, were there when Zeitz came.

Zeitz became involved in training the Ringling elephants and became the assistant superintendent in 1903. He remained with the show until 1905 when he joined the Great Floto Circus. In 1906 Willie Sells, the adopted son of one of the famed



Denman in the Bridgeport winter quarters in the middle 1920s. Circus World Museum collection.

Sells brothers, was taken into the Bonfils and Tammen operation, allowing the show to use the Sells name. The title was changed to Sells-Floto. The *Denver Post's* owners took their circus to almost the heights of the Barnum, and Ringling shows.

The Sells-Floto show herd had females Moma Mary, Freida, Trilby, Alice and two males Snyder and Floto. Moma Mary came from Germany in 1893 for the Hagenbeck animal show at the Columbian Exposition in Chicago. Otto Floto bought her in 1902 for the new Floto Dog and Pony show. Floto and Freida had come as punks from the Hagenbeck Zoo in Hamburg, Germany during the winter of 1903-1904. Snyder came from Hagenbeck in 1904. Alice and Trilby

were received from Frederic Thompson and Elmer Dundy, New York impresarios, in the fall of 1904.

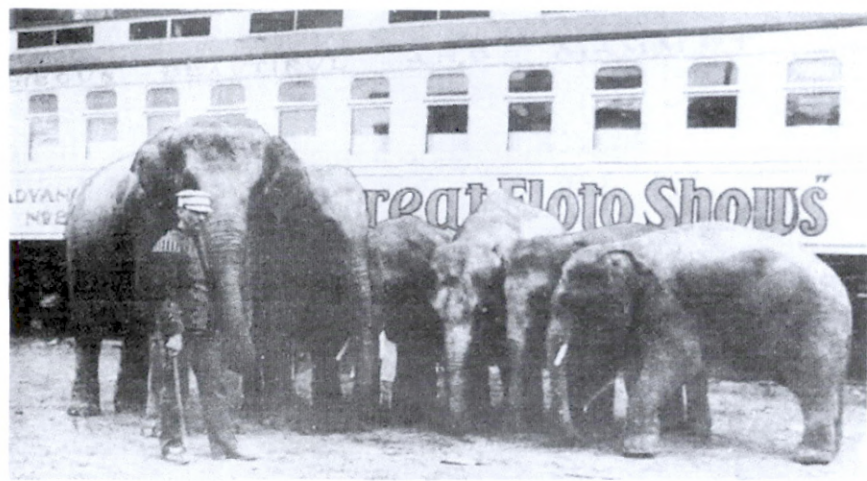
When he came at the Denver winter quarters Zeitz took over the training of the young Snyder, Floto, Alice and Freida. He trained Snyder to walk on his hind legs around the hippodrome track. Lucia Zora, wife of menagerie superintendent Fred Alispaw, worked the elephant act. At the finish she would perch on Snyder's tusks while he walked the track. This was an outstanding demonstration of elephant training.

With the nucleus of the original Floto elephants Zeitz put together an excellent five act. Zeitz was with Sells-Floto through the 1909 season.

His reputation brought him a contract with Norris and Rowe to straighten out their elephants. During the winter of 1909-1910 he routined the herd. Two, including the male Fargo, were in such bad condition they were destroyed. When the circus opened on April 15 at Evansville, Indiana, Zeitz presented the elephants. The Norris and Rowe Circus closed abruptly at Newport, Kentucky and was sent to Peru, Indiana where it was auctioned off. Hero and Duchess were bought by William P. Hall. Major was sold to Jerry Mugivan and Bert Bowers to appear with their Howe's Great London show.

In 1911 Zeitz went to work for the Robinson Famous Circus where he worked dogs and lions and was menagerie superintendent. In 1912 he began a long association with Jerry Mugivan and Bert Bowers when he

Zeitz with the Great Floto herd in 1905. Pfening Archives.



took over the Howe's Great London herd. In 1914 he became menagerie superintendent.

On this show the herd had Cardini Babe, Moms, Topsy, Dutch, Betty and the young tusked Major. Again, Zeitz trained Major to duplicate Snyder's walk around the hippodrome track on his hind legs.

By 1914 Dutch was gone and the female Fanchon joined. Zeitz remembered her from his Ringling days. Fanchon was a tough elephant. In 1915 he moved to the Mugivan and Bowers' Robinson Famous Shows.

In 1916 Mugivan and Bowers bought the John Robinson title. Zeitz was menagerie superintendent and elephant boss on the Robinson show through the 1922 season. There were changes in the Robinson herd over the years. In 1922 the herd included Major, Betty, Ruth, Mama, Blanche, Margaret, Rose, Dutch and Wallace Jennie. Moms, Topsy and Betty had been moved to Hagenbeck-Wallace that year. In 1921 baby Virginia was carried in wagon No. 45 on Robinson. She and Big Tillie were sent to the Floto show in 1922 and were billed as mother and baby on a lithograph.

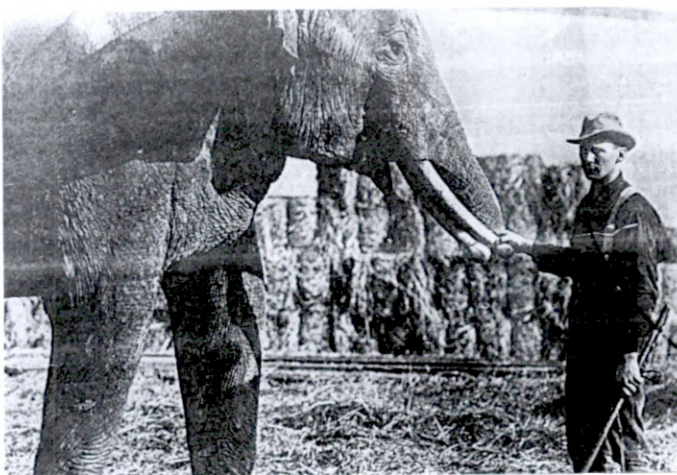
In 1922 Mugivan and Bowers had 14 elephants on Sells-Floto, 12 on Hagenbeck-Wallace, 12 on Gollmar Bros. and 9 on John Robinson. They had 47 bulls on tour compared with 28 on Ringling-Barnum.

In 1923 Zeitz retired temporarily and managed a hotel in Peru, Indiana. But, the lure of the big top drew him back and he was menagerie superintendent on Sells-Floto in 1924. Louis Reed was elephant boss on Floto that year. The season was an uneventful one and Zeitz again called it quits, this time for good.

Zeitz moved to Kissimmee, Florida where he spent the rest of his life managing an orange grove. Zeitz died on January 5, 1953 at the Osceola Hospital and was buried in Rose Hill Cemetery in Kissimmee.

Joe Metcalf

Joseph Henry Metcalf was causal about his year of birth. His death



Chris Zeitz with Prince in the Ringling Bros. winter quarters in 1904. Circus World Museum collection.

certificate read 1893, but his obituary in *White Tops* said it was either 1875 or 1876. The 1893 date seems absurd as he would have been only seven when he entered the circus profession. It appears conclusive that the blessed event took place on March 17, whatever the year, and it happened in Clifton Forge, Virginia.

He spent his early youth in Roanoke, Virginia and as a boy ran away from home to join a wagon circus. He got homesick and quit. The next year he went to work for the Frank C. Bostock Wild Animal Show.

Two years later he joined the Gentry Bros. Dog and Pony Show in 1903. He spent several years with Gentry, first working as a cage hand and then moving to the elephants. Some of the Gentry elephants were Babe, Pinto, Queen, Trilby and a young male name Diamond.

In 1914 he delivered Trilby and Diamond to William P. Hall's circus

Zeitz with Freida and Snyder on Sells-Floto. Pfening Archives.



farm in Lancaster, Missouri. Thus began the career of Black Diamond which ended when he ran away from the Al G. Barnes Circus and killed two people at Corsicana, Texas in 1929. He was killed by a firing squad.

Metcalf was with the Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus in 1916 and 1917. The herd on this show included Josky, Jenny, Pino, Trilby, Nellie, Tess and a young tusked male Little Diamond. The tusked male was sold to William Hall who then sold him to

Honest Bill Newton. He died on that show at Orrick, California in 1927 while pushing a truck out of the mud.

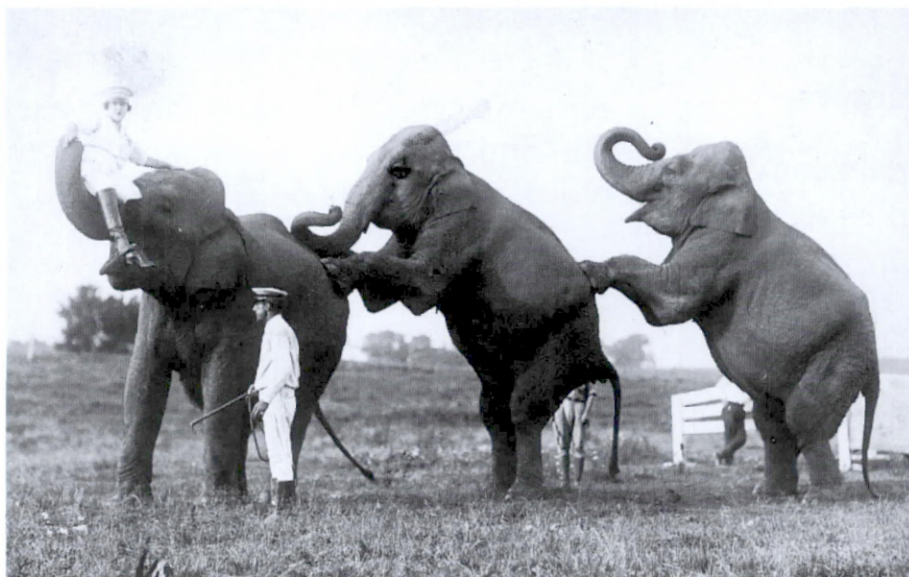
In 1918 Metcalf was with Lamont Bros. Circus. He was on the Mugivan and Bowers' Howes Great London in 1920 and 1921 as menagerie superintendent. The show's elephants were Alice, Lizzie, Nellie Lockhart and the male Toto in 1920. The next year three young elephants, Mary, Kate and Babe, from the Yankee Robinson show, were added.

In 1922 Metcalf was elephant boss on the Gollmar Bros.-Yankee Robinson Circus with five young elephants, Pearl, Jewel, Modoc, Judy and Danny, a male. He also worked a horse-riding lion in the performance.

In 1923 Metcalf went to work at the Hall farm. In 1924 he had the Hall elephants on Fred Buchanan's Robbins Bros. Circus. The herd had Ena, Columbus, Tommy, Ding and Boo. The last three had bad reputations. Metcalf was almost killed by Boo, but remarkably Ding came to his rescue.

In 1925 he had Mary and two males, Prince and Toto, on Arthur Hoffman's Heritage Bros. Prince had been a 1923 import on Sells-Floto and was leased out over the years. He wound up at the San Diego Zoo after killing Joe Reed on a movie set in Hollywood. Prince died from a twisted intestine at the zoo in 1937. Toto wound up at Hall's farm. He was accidentally hanged in a training rigging in 1927.

Metcalf was elephant superintendent on Sells-



Joe Metcalf on the John Robinson Circus in 1924. Pfening Archives.

Floto in 1927 and 1928. This herd numbered twelve, and was an explosive group. It consisted of Barnum Trilby, Frieda, Kas, Young Snyder, Tony, Mary, Barnum Tillie, Virginia, Charlie Ed, Tommy, Prince and Mo. This herd had a reputation for running and they didn't disappoint Metcalf.

Arriving in Lewiston, Idaho from a long hot run from Spokane, Washington, five elephants broke away while unloading. Four of them were quickly caught, but Mary remained free. She went berserk and crashed her head first through a Woolworth store window. She then charged inside and smashed everything in her way. She went back to the street and seized a motorcycle, demolishing it. When circus manager Zack Terrell decided it was getting too dangerous, the town sheriff brought her down with one bullet. At Port Chester, New York, the herd stampeded and Metcalf was knocked down.

Metcalf once told circus fan Harry Quillen about the years he was with Sells-Floto: "Years back in the late 1920s, at the winter quarters in Peru, Indiana, Cheerful Gardner and I had the Hagenbeck-Wallace and Sells-Floto bulls together in the barn—two long lines of 'cows.' After the season Jerry Mugivan would give us a 'C' note apiece for new clothes, and have two cases of Scotch sent to the barn. It was a bonus."

In 1930 Metcalf was the elephant boss on Al G. Barnes. This herd included Tusko, Ruth, Babe, Jewel,

Pearl, Vance, Jennie, Palm and Lois. By this time Tusko had slowed down and was kept heavily chained. The Mighty Tusko had an undeservedly bad reputation. He had never killed anyone. The only problem was his romps from the show. He did much damage and was an eternal financial headache for the circus. In October of 1931 he was sold to Al Painter, a promoter in Portland, Oregon. From there Tusko's career took a turn for the worse. He finally went to the Seattle Zoo where he spent his last days in peace. He died from a brain clot in 1933.

Metcalf left the Barnes show in mid-season 1932. His place was capably filled by Walter McClain who had been on the Sparks Circus the prior year.

Like many other veteran animal men, Metcalf was hired by the Selig Zoo in Los Angeles off and on from 1933 to 1950. When the outlaw elephant Billy Sunday was condemned there in 1949 it was Metcalf's job to give him the poison to down him. It didn't work. Humane officers were called to finish the job with rifles.

The last years of Metcalf's life were spent working chiefly with west coast shows. He had Vera, Shirley, Cross Country Babe, Bunny and India on the Arthur Bros. truck show in 1943. With his wife Anna, he presented the elephant Shirley on Jimmy Woods' 101 Ranch Wild West in 1946 and Yankee Patterson Circus in 1947.

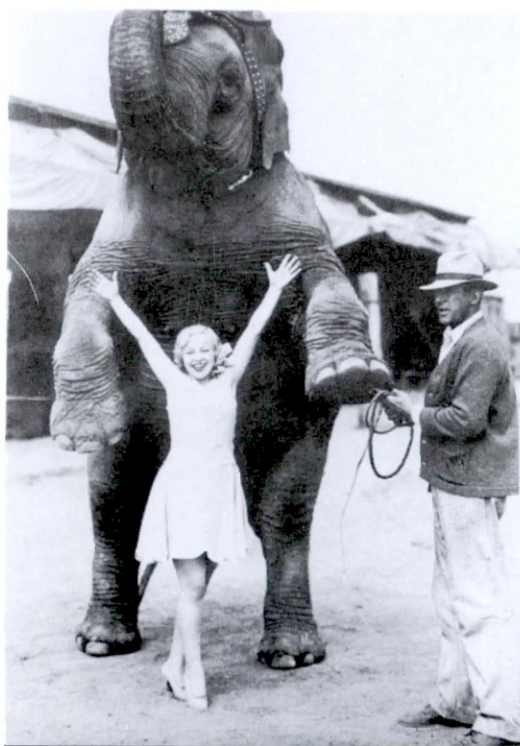
In 1950 an unusual California cold wave hit the Clyde

Beatty Circus while it was playing Los Angeles. The show lost elephants Marion and Mary, despite great effort to keep them alive. Then Anna May and Hattie came down. They wouldn't eat, swelled up and could not lay down. The two were sent to the old Barnes quarters in Venice where Metcalf took over their care. With the help of his wife the two were saved. After two months they were back on the show.

The veteran elephant man's final appearance was with Ward Bros. in 1950. This was a small indoor circus that had Louis Reed and three elephants, Virginia, Nellie and Tex, which had been imported by Dailey Bros. While playing the Long Beach Auditorium the youngsters became frisky and took a run on Reed. He caught and chained them, but in the fracas they broke his arm. Metcalf was contacted at his home in Venice, California and he came onto work the act with Donna Harrell, the elephant girl, coaching him in the routine and tricks.

Metcalf, a great handler of bad elephants, passed away at the Los Angeles General Hospital on January 18, 1956. He was buried only a few feet from two other great animal men, Cheerful Gardiner and Louis Roth.

Metcalf on Al G. Barnes in the early 1930s. Circus World Museum collection.



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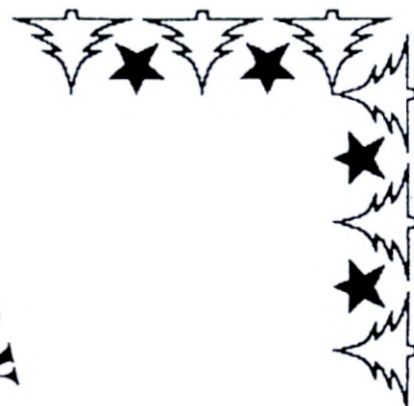
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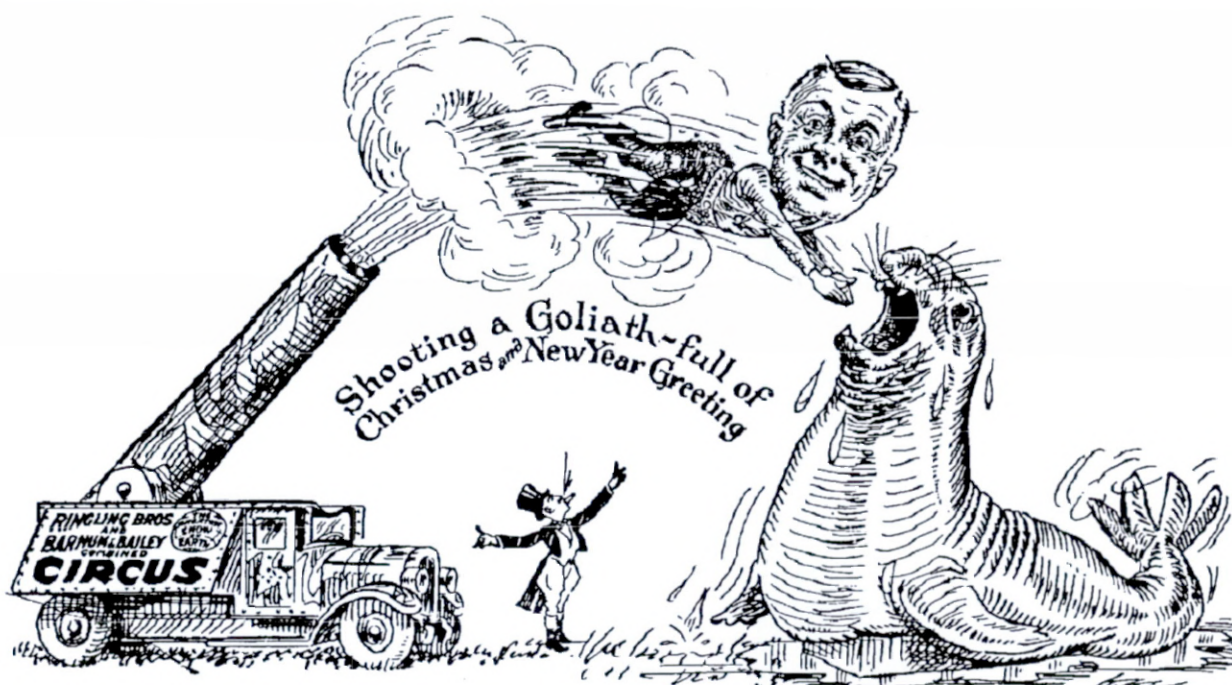
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CIRCUS WINTER QUARTERS OF THE PAST: ROGERS BROS. FORT MYERS, FLORIDA

Buck Owens, a minor motion picture cowboy, appeared with circuses in the 1930s. In the spring of 1946 he joined with Si Rubens in organizing a small circus in Springfield, Missouri called the Buck Owens Circus.

The show toured a long season, closing in Florida in December. The show changed its title to Rogers Bros. when it reopened in February of 1947, playing a Southern route.

The owners parted ways in July

while the show was in Montana.

Rubens stated in November 1947 that he had sold the show to an "eastern syndicate," but would continue as manager. From that time on the show owner was listed as Circus Enterprises, Inc.

The 1948 tour opened in La-Grange, Texas and closed in Edison, Georgia on November 20.

The 1949 season opened with an enlarged show on February 28 in Marriana, Florida and closed in

Plant City, Florida on December 3.

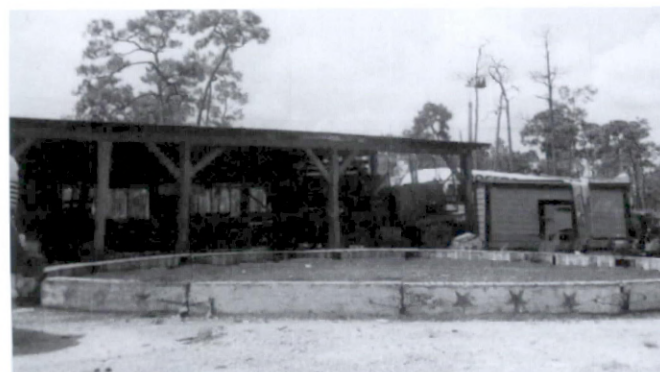
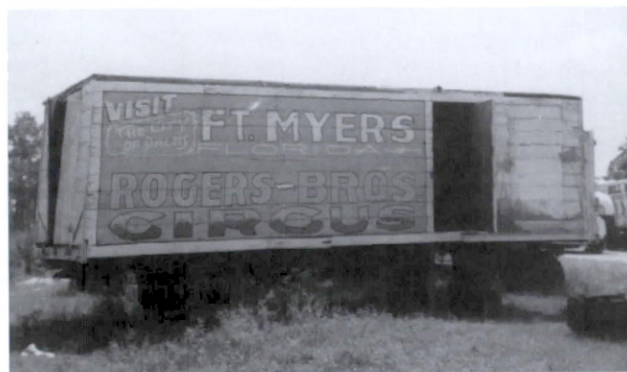
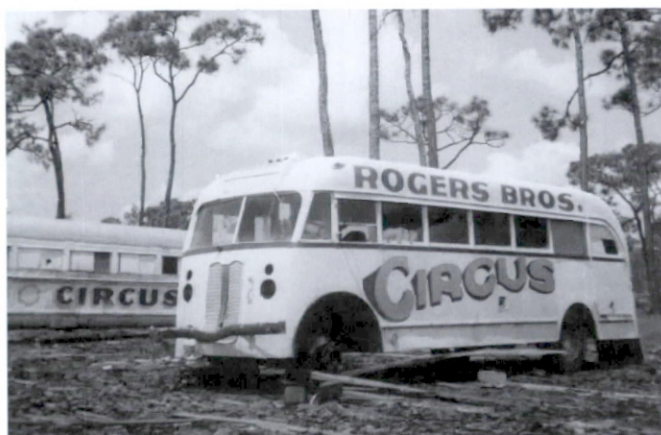
Rubens took the show to a rural site south of Fort Myers, Florida and established a winter quarters. By 1951 the circus had grown and a pole barn and training rings were built at the quarters.

The Fort Myers Chamber of Commerce welcomed the show and the side of a Roger's semi-trailer was a rolling billboard extolling the virtues of Fort Myers as an ideal vacation spot. Photos by John Van Matre.



1951





1953



1897

A handout in the Olathe *Mirror*, August 19, 1897 stated that, "Big show day at Olathe where the celebrated and ever-popular exhibition of the veteran caterer, Col. George W. Hall, will spread its mammoth tents for a display of its myriad attractions. Look at the pictures, read the bills and remember the date. Monday, August 30."

The handout was supported by a two-column ad on a different page: "COMING! In All Its Vast Entirety, [Included "in all its vast entirety" was one advertising car and a train of eight cars]. COL. GEO. W. HALL'S MONSTER R. R. SHOWS! Museum, Menagerie, Equine and Canine Carnival, Combined With Prof. Herr Adam Hagenbeck's World's Famous Trained Animal Exposition will Exhibit at OLATHE, MONDAY, AUGUST 30! Two Exhibitions and Performances Daily. Usual hours. America's Leading and Most Popular Amusement Caterer. Thrilling Balloon Ascension and Parachute Leap! Free to Everybody! Worth Coming Miles to See! Be in town early and witness our GRAND, GLITTERING, ORIENTAL, STREET CARAVAN, rain or shine!

"By arrangement with the American Showmen's Association, the territory is divided, and this will be the only big show here this season.

"This is an honest show. No gambling or games of chance tolerated. Don't forget the day and date, OLATHE, MONDAY, AUGUST 30! Popular Prices."

Another handout appeared August 26; "The great show is extensively advertised in a radius of twenty-five miles. Everybody is on the tip-toe of expectation for the great event which will be at Olathe on August 30, where the public from the surrounding towns and county will assemble for the grand day of sight seeing and amusement. Mark your calendar."

The above handouts were used in every Kansas town.

Following show day, neither the *Kansas Patron*, Olathe's other newspaper, nor the *Mirror* made any mention of Hall's Monster R. R. Shows.

The exhibitions at Ottawa on August 31, inspired the following review in the *Daily Republican*: "Col. Hall's Great Shows have gone. So have several hundreds

ONLY BIG SHOW COMING NOW YOU WILL SEE the FINEST

Vol. V Chapter 3 Part 2
By Orin Copple King

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Orin Copple King

of dollars cheerfully paid out by amusement seekers. it was a 25 cent show, and undoubtedly worth the price asked. The greater part of the specialty acts were excellent--some even superior. The regulation circus performances were inferior, for one thing the horses were poorly trained.

"The menagerie department was mediocre; the side show, the customary delusion, and the concert as usual, 'snide.'

"The show was accompanied by a larger than common number of fakirs of the most pronounced kind. Various schemes were worked on the crowd with considerable success."

Nearly every date was plagued by gamblers and fakirs. The *Republican* ran an interesting account of one fakir's efforts. "BELTED THE SIMPLES. A Circus Fakir Who Paid No Tax.

"A smooth-faced, glib-tongued, steel-nerved chap stood at the corner

George W. "Popcorn" Hall, the Evansville, Wisconsin showman. Pfennig Archives.



of Main and Second yesterday and induced several dozens of people to swindle themselves, in some cases half a dozen times apiece.

"He was a hawker of electric belts, of the 'street fakir' variety (worth perhaps a nickel a dozen), and he attracted a crowd by a running fire of bright talk and the selling a few belts

at 50 cents each.

"Then he introduced a novel 'advertising' scheme. He advanced the price to a dollar, and with each dollar paid in placed a 50 cent piece, wrapping the whole in a dollar bill; this was placed in a hat, held by an accommodating victim, and the inference was cunningly conveyed that each purchaser at the dollar rate got the bundle of money back when "the class was full."

Men fell over each other in efforts to get into the "class," and deep into it, too; not a few bought half a dozen belts each, borrowing the money of neighboring merchants if they didn't have the amount in their pockets. A sort of Klondike craze for gain seized the unmistakably Hypnotized assemblage. The illogical side of the fakir's "advertisement" argument never appeared to them--they blindly believed in his implied intent to return the purchase money with big interest--and shelled out their dollars until the hat was overflowing.

"Then Mr. Fakir calmly drew a corn knife from some concealed place, ostentatiously placed in the view of the crowd and turning to the holder of the hat said, 'Whose money is this?'

"'Yours, I reckon.'

"'What would you do with it if it was yours?'

"'I 'low I'd keep it,' said the fellow with a grin.

"'That's just what I'll do,' said the fakir, causing that wealth to disappear in a capacious pocket with a celerity that was magical.

"He was gone before the crowd got over guessing what he was going to do with the big knife.

"Part 7, section 2, article 11, ordinance 242, relating to licenses, "reads: "For selling, or offering to sell, at auctions or hawking any stock of goods, wares or merchandise which has not been owned by a citizen of Ottawa, or on sale in said city for a period of six full months next preceding, one hundred dollars per week.

"An interesting fact in the connection is that the fakir was not

required to pay a cent, although the above ordinance makes it the duty of the marshal to collect the license or enforce it by prompt arrest."

The *Ottawa Evening Herald* described the parade as consisting of "about a dozen wagons (most of which were closed tight to keep the animals from peeping out). They had also a band, some camels and some fine looking trained horses and spotted Shetland ponies. The tents are pitched on the old show grounds on Logan street where they gave a first class exhibition this afternoon. They give a performance tonight, admission 25 cents.

"They have come, have spread their canvas, and this morning made a curious looking parade through Main street, but that monster big elephant—some five times bigger than Jumbo, as its pictures appear—did not show at all. It is probable that the extremely hot weather of the past few was too much for it and it died on the way."

The *Herald* had much to say when the show had gone: "The circus which struck Ottawa yesterday ought to have paid a license of \$100. It was accompanied by the worst gang of fakirs that ever struck the town. Their sole mission seemed to be to defraud and rob. It was an error to let such a gang into the town for the absurd license of \$10.

"The electric belts, which so many people bought yesterday, are composed of ordinary belting with about six inches of India rubber sewed on the inside containing some mustard and salt. On first application they send a thrill through the body equal to the one experienced when the purchaser discovered he was fleeced.

"There is some disposition to bitterly criticise (sic) the city officers for allowing a fake artist to work his game on a lot of unsuspecting, full grown men yesterday about 5 o'clock. The officers really ought to have taken the names of those who bought the so called electric belts. There should be a law prohibiting the men who buy the things which these circus fakirs sell from running at large on circus day. There ought also to be laws regulating the fakirs, but the real root of the evil is in the men who allow themselves to be faked.

"The electric belt fakir was not the only swindler that robbed the people yesterday. There was a fellow running a regular lottery over at the show grounds. He had a little box from which little cards would be shown on which were letters. The

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Hall took the Adam from Forepaugh and Hagenbeck from Carl in this newspaper ad for Ottawa, Kansas in 1897. Kansas State Historical Society.

victim would put a half dollar in the box and select a certain letter. There were no blanks. Each letter drew a prize, of from a piece of cheap jewelry to \$50 in cash. One old farmer was lucky enough to draw \$20, but was persuaded to put in \$25 more, which he lost. He threatened to call the marshal, when the fakir closed his box and sneaked under the tent, leaving the old farmer with a worthless finger ring."

The *Herald* gave the show a disapproving review: THE CIRCUS "The parade was poor. Only Small Audiences Attended—Rather Inferior Performances—Fakirs in Abundance.

"The show yesterday drew a large crowd of people to town, most of whom, however, came in to see the parade only. This did not prove a good advertiser of the show and when the afternoon performance came off the audience was only a fair one. The night performance was no better patronized.

"The menagerie part of the show is very much limited. The circus performance was all in one ring. Some of the trained animals gave a very good performance, but most of it was of a

very inferior grade. The clown's work was very 'bummy.' What little trapeze performing they did was very fair, but they did nothing new. The tight wire and tight rope performances were exceptionally good.

"The show was followed by a gang of fakirs who perhaps robbed more people than did the show proper."

The *Garnett Journal*, concerning the exhibition of September 1, gave the show a more favorable review: "The Geo. W. Hall circus was in town as advertised Wednesday and made a fairly good appearance in the street parade. The afternoon show was well attended but in the evening only fair. On the whole they did a good business here. There was a balloon ascension and parachute leap at about seven o'clock in the evening which was one of the prettiest we ever saw. The balloon seemed about a quarter of a mile up when the leap was made. The first half of the fall was thrilling; then the parachute filled and the balloonist floated down to the earth as gently as could be. The show had a monstrous big elephant which was very well trained. A couple of baby leopards the size of house cats also excited attention. The trained dogs were the best part of the show however. Taking the show as a whole one cannot help wondering that it takes such a big outfit for advertising purposes while so little is used for the entertainment itself."

Iola saw the show on September 2. The only comment in the *Register* was, "There was a big crowd in town yesterday to see the circus. It was a twenty-five cent show and was worth the money probably."

Two weeks later on October 1 the *Register* mentioned the Hall show, and its owner, while talking about the profitability of traveling shows. "There is lots of money in the show business, if you know how to make it. And Col. Hall, who showed here two weeks ago and who could probably draw his check for \$50,000, started with a trained goose and a corn popper at the county fairs. They called him 'Pop-Corn George' and laughed at his goose. And now everything is lovely and the goose honks high."

"Advertising Car No. 1 came in today on the Santa Fe," according to the August 20 *Chanute Daily Tribune*, and papered the town for the exhibitions of September 30."

The *Tribune* reported that, "Col. Geo. W. Hall's show left for the south this morning after two well attended performances in this city yesterday. They gave very creditable exhibitions."



Gambling flourished in Chanute, but according to the *Tribune*, one fakir was embarrassed by a farm worker: "Made Him Deliver!"

"Yesterday at the show in this city, there were several gambling devices and sharpers to run them who were all doing a flourishing business, when a woman appeared upon the scene. A man, apparently a farmer, was standing off to one side with a long, downcast face. To this man the woman made her way through the crowd of men and boys, and saluted the downcast face man with, 'John! What's the matter?'"

"Well," he replied, 'that fellow over there has got my money.'

"As cool as an ice cream she walked up to the fellow and before she spoke she hashed (sic) out of some mysterious pocket in her dress, a deadly looking six shooter and poking it close up between the man's eyes, said: 'That man you robbed is my husband. Now hand over the money taken from him, or I'll make a stiff out of you in less than a minute.' The man looked at the woman's face just back of the gun and then pulled out a roll of bills, counted out fifty dollars in 'long green' and handed them over to the woman. She took the money to her husband who had remained standing in the same place while the gambling business was rolling on as usual. He counted it in a clumsy,

Part of the Hall parade in front of the two pole big top and marquee. Pfening Archives.

fumbling way and then said: 'There is only fifty dollars here and he took seventy dollars of my money.'

"A blaze shot out from the woman's black eyes, and, turning once more with a spring of a panther on the gag man with that bright barreled revolver several inches nearer his nose than it was before, said: 'Hand over the balance of that money.'

"The roll of bills were once more brought, two tens passed to the woman who quietly walked over to where he husband was, and handed over the two tens with the remark: 'John, let us go from this place. I wonder at you ever finding your way in here.'

"And they passed out while a crowd of men and boys gave three cheers for the brave Kansas woman. The names of the lady and her husband would be published, but they dread the little notoriety, and requested the TRIBUNE reporter to 'please let it go.' They are farmers, living near Shaw, and the city marshal can substantiate the facts as set forth in this article."

The gambler suffered humiliation, but what was the fate of the farmer on the trip home?

The performing personnel of George Hall's circus. Pfening Archives.



The *Kansan*, Pittsburg, covered the exhibitions in that city on Monday, September 6, with few words: "Col. Hall's circus has come and gone. A large crowd attended both performances Monday. The show is an old-fashioned one ring circus and was exceptionally good."

On the 16th, the *Kansan* reported that, "Chas. Francis who was ring master with the Hall circus that came here last week, was taken sick and died in the Hospital last Wednesday [September 8]. His remains were shipped to Chicago."

Hall played Independence, Kansas, on September 10. "A West Cherry youth," according to the *South Kansas Tribune*, Independence, "came in to attend the show on Friday, and was confided out of \$3.50 by one of the fakirs. He went down and scared it out of the fakir." The *Tribune* also noted that J. W. Wylie and his twin sons, George and Jesse, attended the circus."

Without the West Cherry youth and J. W. Wylie and sons, there would be no evidence that Hill ever visited Independence.

The Moline *Register* reported that, "Hall's show came, conquered and went. It drew an immense crowd to town [Saturday, September 11]. Mr. Hall said Moline was the best little town he had been in during the season. He was greatly pleased with his business here and the show was worth all it cost anyone to see it. Of course there was a chance to buy electric belts and some embraced the rare opportunity to get something for nothing. But nobody was seriously harmed. All in all it was a very nice show. The people enjoyed the entertainments and were happy they were on earth to see Hall and his combined shows."

The Winfield *Daily Courier*, concerning show day September 1, commented that "Hall's circus came in from Moline last night. There are eight cars altogether."

Ahead of show day, October 5, the Florence *Bulletin* put to rest an old canard. "When a very large circus is advertised to show in a small town, nobody believes that the entire show will be there. The impression always prevails that it 'splits up,' one portion taking one route and the other another. While a show never has divided and perhaps never will, this impression will always exist just the same. Speak to the average yahoo about it and he will declare that shows divide, telling about a big circus he saw in a large city several years ago and then saw the same one

in a small town, which did not amount to half as much at the latter place. Then he will tell of another instance, that happened several years ago, when the same show was advertised for two different towns the same day. A moment's thought would teach anyone that a circus never divides, for the good reason that it would be impracticable, as well as unprofitable. The circus' reputation is made in country towns. Cities are filled with rubber-necks, but the genuine circus rubber-neck lives in the country or small cities. Whatever reputation a circus has, the country town rubber-neck is its author. The circus manager knows this and he gives the rubber-necks the best he has."

A very rare and seldom seen wild animal was advertised in the *Ellinwood Advocate* concerning the performances there on October 8: "Special: Don't fail to see our '\$10,000 feature,' the frightful blood sweating cloven hoofed South American water elephant. The only one on exhibition in America."

Once again the gamblers did the show a disservice.

"The big (?) show, Geo. W. Hall's, has come and gone, taking with it many of the dollars that rolled into the farmers pockets from their abundant wheat crop. We believe we are safe in saying that it is the poorest 50c show on earth and would be only an average with the 25c class. Gambling schemes were plentiful, fakes and every other scheme disgusting to the average citizen of intelligence. Before the big (?) show had opened, the side show began and a shell game was in progress and one of the show men grabbed \$50 out of one of our farmer's hand and run out of the tent and went in the big (?) tent; three friends of the fellow who had been robbed broke loose after him and had it not been for an assistant marshal who permitted the robber to get inside and held his own people back from going in after him, said robber would not have been able to practice his shell game for a month or two, taking it as it were, the assistant began to look pale under the gills for fear of being whipped which he narrowly escaped.

"The show was well attended in the afternoon and the people expected see a show when they had to pay an admission of 50c, and a great many who had seen a decent 50c show were greatly disappointed; and at the evening entertainment half

the seats (outside of the reserved) were taken down.

"The good wishes that went away with the show were missing and only after the outfit got out of town did the citizens feel safe."

It should be noted that adult admission was now 50 cents.

On October 9, Col. Hall played Kinsley and a story in the *Mercury* provided some personal information about the Colonel: "Col. Hall's circus has come and gone. The attendance was large for a town the size of Kinsley. There was nearly seven hundred dollars in the tent in the afternoon and two hundred in the evening. Beside this the skin games and gambling devices took in about six hundred more so that the outfit took about \$1,200 out of town when they left. The show was not much of a show, but probably worth fifty cents. our people seemed to enjoy it pretty well. The performance was only fair and the display of animals very poor. The show went from here to Dodge working south into New Mexico. The proprietor, Col. Hall is quite an old man and a confederate veteran who bears several marks of Yankee bullets. He is crippled in one hip and has lost two fingers from one hand and bears other marks of the late unpleasantness. He is a farmer when at home in Wisconsin but prefers the excitement and variety of a showman's life and is making money with his outfit."

The Dodge City (KS) *Democrat* said, "W. B. Reynolds, the advance agent of Col. G.W. Hall's New United States Shows, Menagerie and Museum was in the city Friday [October 1] with his car and billed the city. The show will be here on Monday, October 11. This is one of the best tent shows trading."

An extensive review was carried in the *Democrat* following circus day: "Hall's Show reached here during Saturday night last, on Sunday all was hustle and activity about the tents, on Monday morning the big show tent was raised and the crowd commenced to come into town, by 11 o'clock the streets were crowded with people anxious to see the parade which promptly at 12 o'clock started from near the tents. The parade did not come up to the expectation of the crowd. By 2 o'clock the large seating capacity of the tent was all filled and some additional seating had to be put up to accommodate the crowd. The performance was fair and had

about it a good deal of the circus features. The animal part of the show was small. The trained dogs was good, as was also several of the horses. It was announced in the show that a balloon ascension would be made after the show, but the people of Dodge City had been gulled so many times by this announcement from circus managers that not much attention was paid to it. But about 6:30 everybody was surprised to see a balloon being inflated with hot air just south of the tent. The work was being done under the direction of Prof. Chet Baldwin and in less than 15 minutes from the time the inflation was started the balloon was ready to ascend. Prof. Chet Baldwin is a young man, but he has made the business a study from his boyhood

COMING!

The Monarch of all Amusement Enterprises.

COL. G. W. HALL'S

MONSTER RAILROAD SHOWS.

Real Hippodrome, Oriental Caravan. Equine and Canine Carnival Combined with How Hag-enback's Trained Animal Shows.

Will Exhibit at



PITTSBURG, MONDAY, SEPT. 6TH

This Hall ad appeared in the *Pittsburg Weekly Headlight* on August 26, 1897. Kansas State Historical Society.

having come from a family that are noted in this line of work and as the boys remarked who saw him that he was a 'Cracker Jack.' About quarter of seven he gave the word to let go and the balloon shot up into the air with Prof. Baldwin following on his trapeze on which he performed as the balloon ascended, the balloon moved north east, and arose very rapidly till it reached about 2,000 feet and the aerouaunt (sic) looked a mere speck underneath when he was seen to part from the balloon and drop about 200 feet when the parachute was seen to open and his descent was checked and he slowly descended, the balloon as soon as it

was released from its weight turned over and puffed out large volumes of smoke and in a few moments collapsed and rapidly descended to the earth. Prof. Baldwin reached the earth in the vacant lot just west of W. F. Petillion's barn where he was greeted soon by a large crowd who surrounded him and looking on him with wonder and admiration, he stated to them that it was very cold up where he was and one could judge so for his teeth were still chattering from the cold. He jumped on a pony and rode back to the circus grounds. The balloon came down about a block from where the aerouant alighted. It was one of the best ascensions we have ever seen and we have witnessed many of them, and it was the universal opinion that the ascension was worth double the price of admission there were in great many present who had never seen an ascension and they looked on with wonder and admiration of the daring aerouant. Prof. Baldwin will at all times draw a crowd when he comes to Dodge City as he is the first aerouant who has ever went up in Dodge City."

Col. George W. Hall's New United States Railroad Shows in 1897 played the following confirmed Kansas dates: August 30, Olathe; 31, Ottawa; September 1, Garnett; 2, Iola; 3, Chanute; 4, Girard; 6, Pittsburg; 9, Cherryvale; 10, Independence; 11, Moline; 13, Winfield; 14, Arkansas City; 25, Argonia; October 4, Augusta; 5, Florence; 7, Sterling; 8, Ellinwood; 9, Kinsley; 11, Dodge City; 12, Garden City.

La Pearl's Big Railroad Shows in 1897 played three Kansas dates, October 23, Galena; 25, Girard and 26, Pleasanton.

Heading an advertisement in the Galena Times on October 15 was the announcement that, "Will Positively Exhibit at GALENA, SATURDAY, OCTOBER 23. LA PEARL'S BIG RAILROAD SHOWS! [Cut of three bareback riders] Coming in all their VAST ENTIRETY! Bigger, Better, Grander Than Ever, On a Scale of Magnitude Never Dreamed of Before. Magnificent Display of Entirely New Features! \$25,000 FEATURE HIPPOPOTAMUS Weighing 6,000 lbs. Captured in the densest morass of the Wildest Regions of the Mysterious River Nile; The Largest in Captivity.

"CHARLIE The Largest Elephant in America. DING DONG The Smallest Elephant that walks the earth. A Zoological Garden on



J. H. LaPearl. Pfening Archives.

Wheels. Highiara Famous Japanese Troupe. The Only Troupe of Genuine Arabs. The Human METEORS. The La Pearl Family Sensational Aerialists. LA PEARL'S Famous Marine Band, consisting of 24 members, the finest musical organization traveling with any amusement enterprise.

"Be on the streets at 10:30 a. m. and witness the GRAND FREE STREET PARADE consisting of Open Dens of Wild Animals, Beautiful Horses, Golden Chariots, Herds of Elephants, Camels, etc., then following the parade to the Show Grounds and see the Most Fear Defying Exhibition ever witnessed.

"CAPT. ED. NEOLA, The Famous High Diver who will make a headlong plunge through mid-air, a distance of 100 feet from a high tower. A sight worth coming many miles to see and once seen never to be forgotten.

"Remember the day and date, prepare for the coming event, a grand

This unusual bandwagon was first used by LaPearl in 1897. Pfening Archives.



gala day. Coming in all its Gorgeous Splendor GALENA, SATURDAY, OCTOBER 23. ADMISSION For This Day and Date Only, 25 CENTS."

A handout lauding the show and naming a few of the acts appeared in the Times on the 22nd: "A GOOD CIRCUS

"LaPearl's Visits Vincennes for the Seventh Time.

"For the seventh time J. H. LaPearl's biggest little show on earth paid Vincennes a visit delighting everybody. The show is better in every respect this year with many new features added.

"LaPearl's show is a prime favorite with the Vincennes people who always turn out to greet it.

"The name of LaPearl is a popular one with our people, made so by the clean character and excellence of the aggregation, the honesty and sincerity in the managers and the straightforward manner in which the show is conducted.

"Last night's performance is convincing that the management desires to give nothing but a moral, clean and entertaining first class show and how well they succeeded in this respect at their appearance, here, is attested in the manner of approval of the big crowd present.

"The show abounds in marvelous feats, many being entirely new features.

"The LaPearl's appeared in many of their old time, but ever popular roles, which with the new features, was pleasing to an appreciative public.

"Among the many excellent and highly appreciated features were the many and difficult acts of a family of Japanese, whose every appearance was greeted with great delight, the tripple (sic) horizontal bar acts by the Ellitt brothers, the Manola sisters, the Morgans in their re-

arkable feats of trapeze balancing, Malora, the perpendicular ladder balancer, who seems to defy the power of gravity, and last, but not least, the celebrated Marine band, whose excellent music one never tires of hearing. In itself the music by the aggregation of musicians is worth the price of admission.

"The audience was thoroughly pleased throughout and left the big canvass (sic) with nothing but good word and best wishes for LaPearl and his excellent moral show.

"The management is first class throughout and the whole show presents an air of refinement and culture."

Scattered through the *Times* were several short statements: "See Miss Lizzie Guice, queen of the Arena and Champion Lady Principal Rider, with LaPearl's Big 25c railroad show which will exhibit at Galena, October 23.

"Do not fail to see Master Harry LaPearl, America's greatest and youngest somersault rider, with LaPearl's Big Railroad show, which will exhibit at Galena, October 23.

"Everybody should see America's highest salaried Hagihara Japanese Troupe direct from Tokio (sic) Japan, with LaPearl's Big Railroad show which will exhibit at Galena, October 23.

"LaPearl's Big Railroad Show, America's greatest popular priced institution, will exhibit at Galena, October. 23, on a scale of magnitude never dreamed of before. Bring the children to see the beautiful ponies and the cream of the circus talent of the world. You will see more and better male and female bareback riders, gymnasts, acrobats, trapeze performers, contortionists, jugglers, funny clowns, leapers and tumblers, music, performing ponies, dogs and goats than with any other 25c show on earth.

"LaPearl's circus will show in three states in three days. Yesterday [October 21] it was at Rogers, Arkansas, today at Marrett, Missouri, and tomorrow at Galena, Kansas."

The *Times* did not report on the performances, but it did record a painful event: "C. G. Jones, boss of transportation for the LaPearl show, had the little finger of his left hand cut off late Saturday night. He was guiding the front end of a wagon that was being loaded onto a flat car. The wagon bumped against the one in front of it before Jones could remove his hand, and the result was above stated."

WILL POSITIVELY EXHIBIT AT
GIRARD, MONDAY, OCT. 25.

La Pearl's Big Railroad Shows!

TO BE SEEN ONLY
WITH
J. H. LA PEARL'S
GREAT RAILROAD SHOWS
ROYAL MENAGERIE & MAMMOTH MUSEUM



**COMING IN ALL THEIR VAST ENTIRETY.
BIGGER, BETTER, GRANDER THAN EVER.**
This Scale of Magnitude never Deceived Before.

MAMMOTH WATER PROOF TENT.....DOUBLE THEIR FORMER SIZE
CONTAINING AN ENTIRE VILLAGE OF CARS.

Magnificent Display of Entirely New Features

THE BEST AERIALISTS, GYMNASTS, ACROBATS, **1 MORE** WILD ANIMALS, BEAUTIFUL THOROUGHBRED SHETLAND PONIES.

CHARLIE, THE LARGEST ELEPHANT IN AMERICA.
DRUM, DRUM, THE SMALLEST ELEPHANT THAT WALKS THE EARTH.

\$25,000 Feature The **Hippopotamus** weighed 5000 lb.

More Trained Animals than all other Shows Combined; Lions, Tigers, Pumas, Leopards, Bears, Hyenas, Lemurs, Ocelots, A Zoological Garden on Wheels.

Highest Famous Japanese Troupe. The Only Troupe of Genuine Artists.

THE HUMAN METEORS:
THE LA PEARL FAMILY, . . . RENOWNED AERIALISTS.

A.L. under a Mammoth Spread of Canvas. An amusement enterprise requiring years of Prudential Outlay. Ever keeping pace with the times that demand the latest intelligence and an experience gained only by constant study.

La Pearl's FAMOUS MAKING BAND, consisting of 25 members, the finest musical organization traveling with any amusement enterprise.

On the streets at 12:00 a.m. and witness the GRAND FREE STREET PARADE, consisting of Open Lids of Wild Animals, Beautiful Horses, Golden Chariots, Herds of Elephants, Camels, etc., etc. then follow the Parade to the Show Grounds, and see the Most Fear-Defying Exhibitions ever witnessed.

Capt. Ed. Neola The Famous High Diver, who will make a headlong plunge through water, a distance of one hundred feet from a high tower. A sight worth seeing once, tells to see, and never seen never to be forgotten.

No Gambling or Swindling allowed. Honesty and Fair Dealing has ever been the motto of this vast concern.

REMEMBER THE DAY AND DATE— **A GRAND GALA DAY**
PREPARE FOR THE COMING EVENT—

This LaPearl newspaper ad appeared in the *Girard Press* on October 21, 1897. Kansas State Historical Society.

The *Gerard Press*, commenting on the exhibitions there on October 25, stated that, "A Good Circus.

"Another circus has come and gone, and it has been again demonstrated that a circus in this section has lost none of its attractions for either old or young. This time it was La Pearl's Railroad Show which visited our city. The performance was equal to that of any of the world's largest shows, and the people were royally entertained. The circus carries a good menagerie. The band was one of the features of the show, and rendered a delightful concert. On the whole, the circus was above par. It carried with it no fakirs, and there were no signs of the gambling devices usually found about the circus company."

The *Pleasanton Herald* had praise for the show which played that town on October 26: "LaPearl's Show.

"The show has come and gone, and to its credit be it said, it was one of the best that ever exhibited in this city. No rowdism, no fights, no drunken showmen.' So says the city marshal, and we corroborate every word of it. The parade was grand and imposing, better than we had expected: Good horses, pretty ponies, nice vans, fine music and orderly and well-behaved men; no fakirs. After the parade, Capt. Ed. Neola made a wonderful dive of sixty feet from the top of a pole head foremost into a net. Before striking the net he doubled himself up like a ball and landed safely. In the menagerie were all the animals which they advertised, and the hippopotamus was the largest one ever exhibited in this place. It weighed, its keeper said, 4,000 pounds and is thirty five years old. At the command of its keeper it would pen its mouth wide enough to swallow a man. It feeds upon hay and vegetables. The ring performances were equally good and the actors are first class in their several lines. The concert was unlike other shows and consisted of many new and attractive features, out of which was a sword duel by two greasy Arabs, another music on organ, pipes, tin funnels, singing, potato throwing, balls, etc.

"Mr. LaPearl's show is all right and much better than the three ringed concerns and deserves a liberal patronage wherever it goes. I. S. Baliet, the treasurer, is a true gentleman and understands his business. A fair sized crowd was present at each performance and we heard no 'kickere;' all seemed to be satisfied."

Leaving Kansas, the show entered Missouri at Bolton for nine stands. The season ended Saturday, November 6, at Black Rock, Arkansas, a matinee only.

A journey of 6,749 miles ended at winter quarters in Danville, Illinois.

Barnum & Bailey's Greatest Show on Earth did not appear in Kansas in 1897. On October 30, the *Topeka State Journal* published an interesting story concerning Bailey's coming tour of Europe: "BARNUM'S IN ENGLAND Five Big Ocean Steamers Required to Take Over the Show.

"New York, October 30—Four big ocean steamships were required to carry across to England only so much of the Barnum & Bailey show as was to be used in the one winter season of 1889-1890. Now the entire show is going over, for it is to remain in Great Britain two years, and possibly

an additional year or two on the continent.

"Consequently its moving is one that may well call the British Lion's attention, and fix it, with amazed concern, upon the doing of the American Eagle. Nearly all the thousand employees who are to be taken over will be carried on passenger steamers, and the last of them will have taken their departure on November 12.

"Of the material of circus and menagerie there is so much that it loads to their utmost capacity five of the largest freight steamers afloat. These will be sent off as rapidly as possible, the last--scheduled for November 12--taking the menagerie and horses.

"Preparations for this move have been making all the past summer. Reserve cages and wagons at Bridgeport have been cut down and rebuilt to exact dimensions, fitting them for railway transportation in England, and like changes have been steadily going on in adaptation of the cages actually in use during the tenting season. The English railway tunnels and bridges are lower than ours, which necessitates all this work.

"At the same time a large force of costumers have been constantly employed making three complete sets of new costumes of the most gorgeous and costly kind, for all the performers, attendants, ushers and others connected with the show. Even yet, 40 seamstresses are engaged in this work. And all this is in addition to the costumes for 1,200 persons, who are to appear in the great spectacle of 'The Mahdi,' which will be produced in London. Those are now in process of construction on the other side.

"New harness and trappings for 400 horses and a vast quantity of paraphernalia, properties and appliances for the ring performances are made and ready for shipment. And another tremendous item in the list of new provisions is the outfit of tents--200 of them--one of which will be the largest ever seen anywhere.

"The Olympia, in which the show will appear in London, is at least one-third larger than Madison Square Garden, and has a stage 420 feet long by 60 feet in depth. 'The Mahdi,' being gotten up on a scale suitable for that gigantic stage, the tent in which the spectacle, with the



The Barnum & Bailey winter quarters in Stoke-on-Trent, England. Pfening Archives.

rest of the show, will be presented after the London season, must necessarily be of a size to accommodate it. So it is 595 feet long and 210 feet wide. No such tremendous structure of canvas has ever been reared before. It will not only have space along one side for that huge stage, but will seat 14,000 persons, and present an arena large enough for the long line of rings and stages to which the patrons of the show are accustomed, and a hippodrome course surrounding them, on which three chariots, with four horses harnessed abreast to each, may be driven side by side. The poles and seats, even the pegs, for that big tent, are made here. Then there will be a menagerie tent 385 feet long by 195 feet wide; two horse tents, one 285 by 140 feet, the other 235 by 140; side show and curiosities tent, each 150 by 60 feet; cooking and dining tent, 180 by 95 feet; blacksmith tent, dressing room tent, 150 by 60; wardrobe tent, barbers' tent and public refreshment tent, etc, 29 in all--literally a canvas city. The magical celerity with which the city springs into being, the overwhelming magnitude of it when erected, and the suddenness with which it is made to vanish, will undoubtedly amaze the people of England, who have never seen anything at all approximating to it. And a show that travels by rail will be another startling novelty for them.

"The firm of William Henshaw & Co., of Stoke-on-Trent, have constructed an entire new railway outfit for the Barnum & Bailey show, consisting of 60 splendid cars, each from 57 to 60 feet long, and these will be suited for use on any of the railways of Europe except those of Russia, where a different gauge is maintained as a precaution against the possibility of invasion by rail with the rolling stock of other countries.

"The building of these 60 cars and

the erection of permanent winter quarters at Stoke-on-Trent, where a series of buildings 570 feet long has been put up for the show, have together cost Mr. J. A. Bailey a little over \$240,000.

"All the printing for use in England has been done by the Strobbridge and Buffalo

Courier companies and amounts to about \$200,000, so much of it at least as will be taken along now. Two or three times as much more will be required by and by as the present stock is used up, and all will be obtained in this country. Small house bills, programmes and such comparatively unimportant work, may be procured in England, but such great colored posters as this show employs could not be got over there, and the display it makes will be as much a surprise to English color printers as to the general public.

"Taking into account the \$100,000 necessary for expenditure in fitting up the Olympia for the extraordinary requirements of 'the big show,' the outlay for printing, new costumes trappings, tents, cages, wagons, cars, winter quarters, etc., the investment actually made in transferring this show to London, not including whatever the cost of the stupendous 'Mahdi' spectacle may be, will very closely approximate to \$1,000,000, if, indeed, it does not exceed that sum, before the doors of the Olympia are opened to the public.

"To carry out his plans, which includes the keeping of one show in Europe and two in this country, permanently, Mr. J. A. Bailey has associated with him one of the oldest, and by long odds the richest men of the United States, Mr. W. W. Cole.

"Over \$1,500,000 worth of most profitable real estate in Chicago--one plot of which brings an annual rental of \$100,000--belongs to Mr. Cole, and it has been supposed that he had definitely retired from active business. Such magnificent schemes as Mr. Bailey's have tempted him into the hurly-burly again however. While Mr. Bailey manages the Big show in London, Mr. Cole will direct the 'Wild West' and the Sells-Forpaugh (sic) show in this country--one in the eastern and the other in a western circuit."

Research funded in part by grants from Wolfe's Camera & Video Inc. Topeka, Kansas

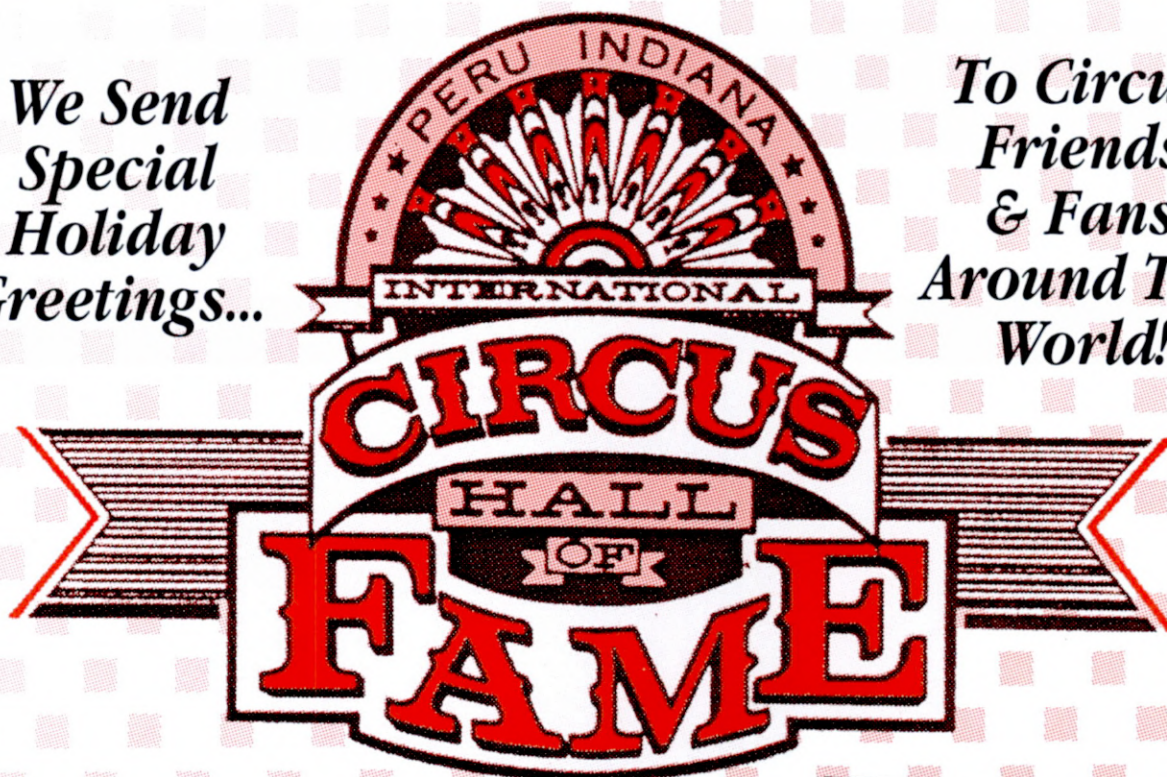
Merry Christmas & A Happy New Year!



Kenneth Feld presents
SIEGFRIED & ROY®
AT THE MIRAGE

LAS VEGAS

*We Send
Special
Holiday
Greetings...*



*To Circus
Friends
& Fans
Around The
World!*

Here are some highlights of our 1997 Season:

- The last American Circus Corp./Cole Bros. cage wagon returned to our historic winter quarters and was restored.
- A mobile classroom and smaller mobile home were donated to the Hall of Fame to house circus memorabilia and use as a research center.
- The first Circus Swap Meet was held in June. The second will be Saturday, July 11, 1998, the kickoff of the 1998 Circus City Festival.
- This year, two of the five newly acquired Robert Weaver paintings were placed on display. They are "The Hannefords" and "The Back Door." Robert Weaver's painting of Lou Jacob is already on display.

The Hall of Fame winter quarters has become a home away from home between engagements for many circus performers. Visitors with us this summer included:

- The Galumbo Family
- The Jeff Plunkett Family
- The Tino Wallenda Family
- The Ellian Rosaire Family
- Mr. & Mrs. David Tesch
- Mr. & Mrs. Lee Stevens
- Mr. & Mrs. Jose Barreda
- Mr. & Mrs. Pedro Carrillo, Jr.
- Mr. & Mrs. Mike Clark
- Harvey Clark and grandson J.D.

Others staying on our "back yard" were Bill Gresbam and Bill Puckett and Jens and Maggie Larson also stopped by.

*Become a member of the
International Circus Hall of Fame*

Send your check, made out to Circus Hall of Fame & this information to the address below.

Name _____ Address _____
City _____ State _____ Zip _____
Telephone Number _____

Annual Contributing Membership \$500 _____ Annual Sustaining Membership \$250 _____
Annual Family Membership \$60 _____ Annual Individual Membership \$20 _____

***Come visit us and see what we have
planned for our 1998 season!***

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Mike Martin's Circus Hobby Hall

*Circus Hobby Hall
and
Center Ring Video*



*Wish Everyone
The Happiest Of
Holiday Seasons!*

CIRCUS VIDEOS ----- BEST OF THE OLD & THE NEW

DOUBLE FEATURES: Just like the old Saturday Matinees, here are two complete circus movies or programs on one 2 HR tape.

A) **'UNDER THE BIG TOP'** 1943, with Jack LaRue and Marjorie Main.

-PLUS- **'CAGED FURY'** 1951, with Buster Crabbe and Richard Denning. Here are two good circus pictures filmed with excellent under canvas scenes and spectacular fire sequences. You'll love this tape.

B) **'PERILS OF THE JUNGLE'** 1954, with Clyde Beatty facing savage natives and killer gorillas in darkest Africa.

-PLUS- **'BRING 'EM BACK ALIVE'** 1932, with Frank Buck journeying deep into the Malayan jungles in search of exotic animals. This is another pair of good films you're sure to sit back and enjoy!

C) **1961 R/B TV HIGHLIGHTS**, hosted by popular entertainer Arthur Godfrey presenting a spectacular cast including Trevor Bale, Galla Shawn, Flying Gibsons and Zacchini's Cannon!

-PLUS- **1964 ED SULLIVAN SHOW**, with the first American appearance of the fabulous Moscow Circus. Highlighted by several featured spots by master clown Oleg Popov.

RARE & UNUSUAL: Here are two tapes that are sure

to please! Both are Hobby Hall exclusives.

D) **'CIRCUS PRINSESSAN'** 1995, Leave it to the Europeans to present a true **'CIRCUS FIRST'**- the world's only **All Female Circus!** And it's great! Created by Sweden's famous CIRCUS SCOTT, the show is First Class all the way, with fantastic aerial and ground acts, comedy and variety turns, presented by the very best female performers!

E) **'CIRCUS AMERICA'**, In April 1974, the Capital Centre, presented the World Premier of a new circus in direct opposition to RINGLING/BARNUM! This was one for the record books! Offering top talent like Karl Wallenda, Tarzan Zerbini, Emmett Kelly plus scores of performers from 'round the world. Here's your chance to see what all the hullabaloo was about, when this upstart show gave Ringling a real run for it's money!

ALL VIDEOS - \$29.50 POSTPAID



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FELD ENTERTAINMENT
PRESENTS

RINGLING BROS. AND THE GREATEST SHOW ON EARTH BARNUM & BAILEY

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SEARS



Happy Holidays

from

THE GREATEST SHOW ON EARTH®!

